



# JOAN OF ARC

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

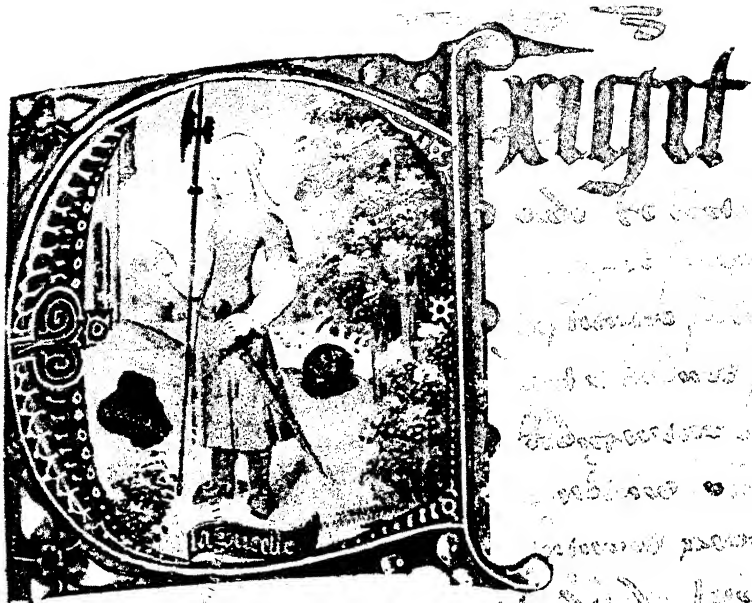
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## JOAN AS A SHEPHERDESS

# JOAN OF ARC

BY

MILTON WALDMAN

AUTHOR OF "ELIZABETH,"  
"SIR WALTER RALEIGH," ETC.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS*

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## CHAPTER I

### THE LOST JOAN

THE last wail of "Jesus" died on the air and the flames leapt toward the midday sun. Before the pyre stood the Dominican Brother Isambard de la Pierre, still holding aloft the borrowed cross, and at his side Brother Martin Ladvenu, of the same order, knelt in prayer on the rough cobbles. The spectacle was nearing its end.

But on the wooden platforms propped against the adjacent buildings the dignitaries of Church and State—themselves an impressive spectacle of massed scarlet and ermine, purple and silver, black and gold—glanced at one another uneasily. There was something wrong, an atmosphere of perplexity and worse, of doubt, hanging thick over the Old Market Place. On the little dais hard by the scaffold Nicolas Midi, the canon of Rouen Cathedral who had carried out with commendable severity the task of rehearsing her sins to the victim before they bound her to the stake, was exhibiting every sign of an imminent collapse. The 800 English soldiers, drawn up in a rectangle to keep back the thrusting mob, had suddenly stopped bawling at the priests to get on with the show so that they could get on with their dinners and fallen into a glum and ominous silence; some of them looked as if they were about to imitate the preacher. The mob itself, whose spiritual instruction was the chief purpose of the spectacle, had ceased pushing against the lines of

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Jacques d'Arc, known to his familiars as Jacquot, was born in about 1375 at Ceffonds in the diocese of Troyes in Champagne. As a young man he emigrated, married Isabel, daughter of a prosperous peasant of Vouthon, a few miles to the north-west of Domrémy, and settled down in the latter village to become in time a comparatively substantial tenant-farmer. His land consisted of perhaps fifty acres, of which approximately thirty would have been under cultivation and the remaining twenty divided equally between pasture and woodland. He owned his thatched stone cottage and its furniture, and apparently had some money put aside against a rainy day. In 1423 he became dean or headman of his village, the official charged with assembling the burghers at the electoral assemblies and the courts, convoking the mayor and aldermen, commanding the watch and guarding imprisoned offenders, collecting the rents and taxes, supervising the quality of the bread and wine and the accuracy of weights and measures. The term of office was a year and during that time the incumbent was exempt from the payment of the ordinary rates. A further mark of his position as a responsible citizen was that he assumed, with one Jean Biget, on behalf of the village, the lease of a small island and fortress in the Meuse from the Lady of Ogiviller, mistress of Domrémy and the surrounding country.

By far the most important influence in Joan's early life was her mother's. Her father barely appears in her history except to threaten to drown her if she goes off with the soldiers. Her three brothers, Jaquemin, Jean and Pierre were of course drafted at an early age to help with the work of the farm; the two younger eventually followed her standard, but all evidence leaves the

## THE LOST JOAN

created by man which man himself cannot destroy. The legend of Joan the Maid was full grown before her judges ever set eyes on her, and it continued to flourish despite the 111 folio sheets of closely-written Latin with their formidable content of accusations and confessions, proofs and royal attestations. The judges and their work were soon, and for ever, repudiated, her legend continued to flourish from age to age. The very Church which burned her as a sinner rehabilitated her after twenty-five years as a simpleton and canonized her after five hundred as a saint. She became the inspiration of a great people, a lesson in the heroic virtues to the young, an object of veneration in churches, public thoroughfares, art-galleries and picture-books. Posterity has awarded her everything, and more, that her judges tried to take from her, except of course her life, which is the least of what they wanted. But even posterity has failed to restore what she had already lost when she came into their hands—her common ordinary humanity. She rides down the ages as a bronze image on a horse, with a sword held high in one hand and a pennon in the other, like nothing that ever lived; so each generation receives her and reverently passes her on.

It is her early historians she has to thank for that. From the moment she appeared from practically nowhere with the promise to redeem the realm of France they hung her with miracles as saints are hung with flowers; only the miracles clung while the flowers are in time swept away. There are about three dozen chronicles, written during her life and in the half-century following, devoted in whole or part to her and her achievements; in addition there exist innumerable fragments, letters, verses and other miscellaneous pieces.<sup>1</sup> In no single one

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bibliographical Note.

Nor is it likely that there was a complete rupture between her and the king, for when she was captured she had a substantial sum of his money with her to pay her followers. On the other hand, she was taken fighting in defence of Compiègne, which Charles had formally returned to Philip the Good—but the obedience expected of the chief of a roving band in those days was highly flexible and capricious.

At Melun she had a success and a first warning of disaster. The town had been under Anglo-Burgundian rule for ten years, but at the Maid's appearance the citizens rose, threw out the garrison and declared for Charles VII. It was a personal triumph for Joan, since she had no army with her, nothing but her few loyal followers. Apparently the garrison did not depart from the vicinity without a struggle, for Joan mentions at her trial being "in the moats of Melun" where there was no reason for her to go except to fight. And it was there that Saints Catherine and Margaret told her of her fate, or so much of it as they chose to reveal at the moment: "You will be captured before the day of Saint John (June 24th), for so it is decreed. Be not amazed, take what befalls in good part and God will sustain you."

Then, or more likely after she had recovered from her first shock (for the warning was repeated), she asked when she would be taken, and prayed that she should be allowed to die without suffering "long agony of imprisonment." The Voices merely repeated the injunction to take what came in good part, since so it was decreed, but they would not enlighten her on the time or place. The presentiment that her career was to be short—the "year and a little more"—had at last taken definite shape. It no more entered her head to go back

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Rouen. A whole new batch of miracles was submitted to the scrutiny of the commissioners and the legend regilded as bright as ever—none assisting more wholeheartedly than various of the clerics who had once voted with equal enthusiasm to burn her. In the end the dead Joan was so thoroughly rehabilitated that there could never in the future be the slightest danger of confusing her with the living Joan who had sat for Cauchon. The justice of the verdict cannot be disputed, but it seems a pity that the baby had to be thrown out with the bath.

The legend is now too old, too rugged, even too hallowed ever to be seriously modified. It affects even the sincerest and ablest efforts to rediscover her as she really was in life. A whole generation of the best scholarship of France dedicated itself to rescuing her a second time from the hands of Pierre Cauchon and his colleagues, whither those gallant historians of the nineteenth century were persuaded she had been returned by the weary scepticism of the eighteenth. In reaction there arose a school of quizzical rationalists determined to put her in her place, whatever that place was. The most illustrious of these iconoclasts was Anatole France, who knew the documents as well as any man, could think better than most and write better than almost any; but he began and proceeded on the assumption that anyone who believed in a personal communication from God in the fifteenth century must necessarily be as woolly-headed as he probably would be in the twentieth, and as a result dismissed Joan as the tool of priests and politicians who on the plainest evidence were a good deal more muddled in their wits than ever she was. Andrew Lang then dashed in, angrily ticked off M. France for slander and

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careless footnotes, and chivalrously restored the heroine to her pedestal; where she again assumed the same fixed bronze stare that had originally tempted the offender's irreverent curiosity. More recently Mr. Bernard Shaw has used her as a stick to beat human stupidity with; every blow was shrewd and true, only it happens that Joan was anything but a stick.

Perhaps men are right in clinging to the legends they have made of the good, the wise and the great who have left the earth. It may be that truth lives only by faith and faith only by symbols. Yet there is an irresistible fascination in turning over the records of the famous dead and trying to recover the sense of their warm being in the time that was their vivid present and is our dim past. Whether what one sees and feels in that pursuit is the truth no seeker can say with certainty, for there is no test, and what he can manage to convey to others can be but a poor reflection of his own experience. But truth is a thing of many dissimilar fragments painfully assembled and never completely—a maxim to which Joan's judges paid insufficient heed when they permitted themselves to burn her.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

THE first mystery about Joan is the date of her birth. The accepted date, January 6th 1412, is mere guesswork and early tradition. She herself never knew her exact age. In 1431 she told her judges that "she was nineteen, as it seemed to her." When asked how old she was when she left her father's house two years earlier she replied that she did not know, and her judges filled in the answer with the calculation that she was "in the seventeenth year of her age or thereabouts." Nearly all who knew her in those two years agree that she appeared to be eighteen or nineteen, so that 1411 or 1412 would seem to be a reasonable inference. On the other hand one of her childhood friends, when giving her own age as forty-five at the Trial of Rehabilitation in 1456, thought that Joan was three or four years older—a statement round which the elaborate story of Joan being a natural child of the Duke of Orleans, put out secretly to foster-parents in Domrémy, has largely been woven. Poor Hauvette, wife of a village labourer, illiterate and over-awed, probably knew no more of her own age than did most of the other witnesses of her class, who surmised that they might be "about" forty or fifty or sixty; and her single recollection after twenty-five years can scarcely be weighed against that of Joan herself and a dozen others who would at least have known the difference



between a living girl of nineteen and one of twenty-four. The actual date itself is part of the legend; an important day had to be chosen, and the Feast of the Epiphany, when the Magi visited the cradle of the infant Saviour, was as good as any. It helped to give a touch of plausibility to the portents in the heavens and the crowing of the cocks that people later recalled having seen at the hour of the heroine's appearance on earth.

Even her name is a posthumous fabrication. She was baptized Jeannette at the font of the parish church of the Blessed Rémy, according to the testimony of two of her godmothers who bore the same name; and it was by this name that everybody called her until she went into France. There they formalized it into Jehanne and added the title of *La Pucelle*—the Virgin or Maid, a word of obscure origin but probably derived from the Latin *puella*—which was what she styled herself thereafter and how she signed her letters with a priestly amanuensis to guide her hand. When her judges asked her surname she replied that her father's was d'Arc and her mother's Rommée, but that in her country girls were usually known by their mother's. It is believed that the Rommée was substituted for another surname after a pilgrimage to Rome by some member of the family, as was the custom of the time. The early fifteenth century did not take nomenclature very seriously; a man called himself by different names if he liked and used them together or interchangeably. Pronunciation and spelling were even less subject to rule: the patent of nobility granted to the family of Jacques d'Arc for his famous daughter's services spelt the name d'Ay, while her judges wrote it d'Arc, so apparently two scribes heard it quite differently; one

modern scholar gives it as Dars and another as Daïz. Joan's brothers simplified the matter by transforming it into Lys.

It is by no means certain that she was born on the soil of the country whose national hero she was to become. Domrémy, her birthplace, at that time a village of about fifty or sixty families, lies on the left bank of the River Meuse. To the east of it was the Duchy of Lorraine, then part of the Holy Roman Empire, and to the west Champagne, over which the English exercised a shaky sovereignty; to the south was the Duchy of Burgundy, where reigned Philip the Good, England's ally and sworn enemy of the house of France, while all round were semi-independent feudal baronies whose lords made treaties now with one side and now with the other, according to which was momentarily able to offer the biggest bribe or threaten the severest compulsion. In all that tract of hostile country only the thin strip of a dozen miles or so on the left bank of the Meuse was by any possibility French; within it lay part only of Domrémy, but which part no one knows because the stream that marked the boundary has now completely disappeared.

The Meuse, broad and shallow, flows north at that point through a wide valley bordered by low wooded hills. It was then, as it is now, particularly rich in its grazing, but fertile also in corn and, to a lesser extent, wine. Its hills are noted for their springs, the river for its mists, its sky for the abundance and variety of its cloud effects. The inhabitants were (they are still said to be) industrious, thrifty of their words and their money, and able to worry along without strangers or novelties.

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exact meaning of the Prophets. When she was watching the village herds for her father—a communal duty taken in turn—and the church bells sounded, “the sweet Voices of Heaven” to the folk of the Middle Ages, she knelt and crossed herself; the parish bell-ringer told how the small girl would scold him when he failed to sound compline and promised him her own little ration of cakes if he would do better in future. Sometimes it was noticed that she quietly disappeared from the midst of her games, and a playmate who marked what she then did called it “drawing apart and speaking with God.” On Saturdays she would trudge up the hill to offer a candle in the chapel of Our Lady of Bermont, and on feast days she would go even farther afield: every holy place within reach, however obscure or unfrequented, knew the sturdy, brown-faced, black-haired child.

Now and then a boy laughed at her for her excessive devotions: one would like to know whether she resented it or not, and how, but the record does not say. He probably did not laugh very often or long, for she appears to have been well able to take care of herself, then as later; she certainly does not seem to have been a mere round-eyed bystander in the bloody battles fought with stones between the young Armagnacs (the party name of the French loyalists) of Domrémy and the infant Burgundians of Maxey on the other side of the river. Jingo sentiment runs high with the normal child during a war, and Joan was no exception: she once coolly proposed to cut a local Burgundian’s head off as a traitor. In fact it is as a normal child in all respects except for that rare religious intensity that she appears in the recollections of her contemporaries.

The focus of the village’s outdoor life was the Tree of

Ladies, or Fairies, that stood in the fields slightly to the south-west. It was there that the young gathered on Sundays in the spring and during the long summer evenings, when "its broad spreading foliage was weighted to the ground . . . and it was lovely as the lilies"—the description is the peasant Gerardin d'Epinal's, to whose infant daughter Joan stood as godmother before she left. Its special festival was the fourth Sunday in Lent, when the children hung it with garlands and joined hands to sing and dance round it. Afterwards they spread a cloth beneath its branches and made a meal of nuts and specially-baked little breads; then they ran and played till the sun went down. The ceremony, in its origins probably much older than Christianity, went on till long after Joan's day. The Tree itself was cut down in the Thirty Years' War.

It had got its name in former times when the knights and ladies of Bourlemont, lords of Domrémy for many generations, went there to walk, to read romances and to converse with the fairies in its shade. The Bourlemonts were gone and the fairies came no more, though no one could say why, since the tradition was still faithfully carried on. Old Beatrix, aged eighty, widow of Estellin the labourer, guessed sadly that "it was for our sins they came no longer," but Jean Morel, one of Joan's god-fathers, was inclined to think that they had stayed away since the gospel of St. John was first read under the tree. Every June now a procession of the villagers carrying crosses wound their way over the fields on the Eve of St. John to hear the *curé* repeat the Evangel—which he very likely did with the private intention that the spirits should not return. The only living person who was believed to have seen them since that time

was Jeanne Aubery, wife of the mayor and another of Joan's godmothers; but the claim was other people's, not hers, and her god-daughter later denied ever having heard her make it.

Near the Tree was the Fountain of Gooseberries or Fountain-of-the-Fairies-of-Our-Lord, in whose waters sufferers from fever might be cured; it, too, was the centre of various ceremonies and beliefs. Hard by was a hazel-nut tree, under which was reputed to grow the mandragora, that grotesque root in human shape which screamed with pain when it was pulled up and made rich any possessor with a knowledge of the proper formula for its use. Both the fountain and the root were to have their effect on Joan's fortunes.

Most important and sinister of all was the *Bois Chesnu*, the Oak Wood that grew farther up the hill to the west. Learned men said that it was the *Nemus Canutum*, the Hoary Grove, from whose precincts the enchanter Merlin had written long ago that a miraculous virgin would appear. The French of *canutum* is *chenu*, so by an easy transition the Oak Wood of Domrémy became the Hoary Grove of a prophecy that was never uttered by a wizard who never existed. The villagers thought the place haunted and kept away from it. Joan, afraid neither of spirits nor her own company, did not, and her temerity set the local tongues a-wagging; it was reported that she was in communication with the Fatal Ladies who inhabited the Wood.<sup>1</sup> In consequence the wolves who lurked there never molested her father's pigs when they rooted for acorns in her charge and the birds came

<sup>1</sup> The reference in the Trial of Condemnation seems to be to the Tree, but the whole context shows that this is a textual slip and that the Wood is meant.

down into her lap to be fed. The etymological blunder of the scholars and the gossip of the village were to give the Oak Wood a strange prominence in Joan's fortunes.

The household and the fields provided the occupations of those first sixteen years, the changing seasons their milestones, the jumbled mixture of Christian and Pagan belief their principal intellectual nourishment, but from the outside world there drifted in other, and profound, influences as well. Through Domrémy ran the Langres-Verdun highroad, connecting the two portions of Philip the Good's domain, and over it passed in one direction the great brightly painted carts, drawn by a dozen horses, bringing the huge wine casks from Burgundy into Flanders, and in the other the gorgeous textiles from the looms of Ghent and Bruges, the exotic wares distributed through the port of Antwerp, that helped make Dijon the most brilliant capital of the age. Along that road passed also begging friars and vagabond soldiers, glad to exchange news and a story for a night's lodging. To them Joan often gave up her bed and herself slept in the chimney corner, later speeding them on their way with alms when she had anything to give. From those vagrants she would have had the tales of the saints and martyrs through whom God had revealed Himself to men, and of the kings and knights who loved justice and did mercy (all of them, alas, dead). In the listening girl was lighted an understanding of that fine, high thing called chivalry which for her became one of the two supreme realities, the other being the nearness of God.

From these wanderers she learned too of the historical and sentimental meaning of the word *France*, "*le doux royaume*," once blessed in all good things, including



saints to spread God's Word and heroes to uphold it, but now almost crushed under the weight of its afflictions. She heard of the poor young dauphin, the uncrowned king driven from pillar to post by the invaders from over the sea, those terrible English who never opened their mouths without offering their souls to perdition, whence their name of Godons or Goddamns; of the destruction and terror and hopelessness so widespread and profound that it exceeded the power of man unaided to bring back peace and order. Something of what was going on in France she could reconstruct out of her own small experience: the grinding tribute paid to the neighbouring barons for a sardonic protection, the eternal and costly vigilance, the fearful day when the armed bands broke through, stole the cattle, set fire to the houses and sent the inhabitants scurrying to the island fortress of which her father and Jean Biget had taken the lease against just such an emergency. On this occasion the cattle were redeemed through the influence of the Lady of Ogiviller, but three years later, when Joan was sixteen, she and her neighbours were again fleeing before fire and sword to the market town of Neufchâteau, six miles to the south.

There the d'Arc family remained a fortnight in a hostelry kept by a woman named la Rousse, Joan helping with the domestic tasks by way of contributing to her share of the expense. In due course Madame la Rousse's hostelry was to evolve into a brothel for soldiers and Joan into an inmate who learned from her clients to ride and bear arms in her spare time.

Probably these calamities made smaller impression on the people of Domrémy than they do on us. Terror and suffering were the daily lot of the great majority of the Dauphin's subjects, and the lives led by that small,

isolated community in the Meuse valley were by comparison uneventful. They could still take their herds out to graze and cultivate their fields for years on end, whereas in most of France these occupations could only be carried on under fortified walls with an ear ever alert for the bell in the watch-tower. They still had a church to worship in and the old landmarks to keep alive their sense of continuity—invaluable bulwarks against despair, which elsewhere were in ruins. Even to Joan of the thoughtful mind and alert imagination those rumoured sufferings must, with their embroidery of the supernatural, have possessed a certain air of unreality. One wonders whether, if her corner of France had been crushed under the same hopelessness as the remainder of it, it would have been able to send forth a maid to redeem the kingdom by her faith.

For there was nothing horrific about the circumstances in which her mission was revealed to her. It was noon of a hot summer's day in her thirteenth year and she was standing dreamily in her father's garden when she heard a voice "from the right, toward the church" next door and at the same instant was conscious of a dazzling light on that side. Bewildered she looked about her: the voice addressed her again and she raised her head to behold the radiant figure of a man poised on wings.<sup>1</sup> Terrified she sank to earth, but his tone was of such superhuman gentleness that she knew he must be an angel. He told her to be a good girl, to go often to church, and that it was God's will that she should go into France.

<sup>1</sup> Joan steadily refused to describe the physical appearance of the angel, but the wings are a reasonable inference from an assertion by her judges (March 3rd) which she allowed to pass uncontradicted.

That is her own account of the first vision, and there is, of course, no other of any value. Under the terrific cross-examination of her judges she modified, elaborated, contradicted and confused, but that first story remained substantially unchanged. The details of the later visions are harder to fix: she did not want to talk about them, because of a promise to God and out of loyalty to her king; she was stubborn and adroit, "with the subtlety of a woman," as one of her astutest questioners remarked, at evading what she preferred not to answer; sometimes she lied, as she gave warning that she would before she took the oath; and sometimes her memory played her false as to the sequence of events in those varied exciting years between the first coming of the Voices in Domrémy and the last in Rouen.

The visitor returned at frequent intervals and the third time she knew that he was the archangel Michael, but how she recognized him she always refused to say. He told her "of the great pity that was over France"—the phrase itself is worthy of an angel—and that through her the realm would be delivered from its oppressors. After some hesitation she believed and made a vow to preserve her virginity until the great work should be accomplished. The archangel promised further that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret would be sent by God to sustain and advise her in all difficulties, and in due course they appeared and announced themselves to her by name. As time went on the mission took more specific form: she was commanded to go to Robert de Baudricourt, captain of the neighbouring town of Vaucouleurs, who held the region in the name of the Dauphin, and require him to provide her with an escort to take her to the court in far-off Chinon; she was to relieve Orleans, the

last great town in the Dauphin's obedience, after it was invested by his enemies; and she was to bring the Dauphin himself to Rheims for his coronation. The commands were issued intermittently for three or four years.

That long delay is one of the most puzzling parts of Joan's story. If, as she says, the archangel told her almost at the very beginning to go into France, why did she allow so long a time to elapse before she obeyed? She herself swore that she had never disobeyed her Counsel (a name she used interchangeably with Voices) in anything before her leap from the tower of Beaurevoir, which took place long afterwards. Her judges did not ask her to explain the delay and would have been told "that everything she did was by command of God" if they had—her invariable answer when they had her in a tight corner. The specific impulse that set her in motion was the peril of Orleans, first besieged in October of 1428. One must either assume that the explicit command to go to Vaucouleurs was not transmitted until after that date, or else that her own will suddenly responded to the call of circumstances. The first assumption merely supposes that her memory played queer tricks as to the sequence of events—a common failing of the medieval mind—but the second goes to the root of the whole problem of Joan: the exact nature of what she called her Voices.

Her own belief in their genuineness cannot be doubted. Even her judges, who did not exclude the possibility that they were her own invention, in the end seemed to concede her sincerity and condemned her rather for not taking the Church's word that the Voices were sent by Satan. The vast majority of her contemporaries

accepted it as a simple fact, in no way requiring explanation, that they came directly and bodily from heaven, just as she said: though a small minority, including several of her judges, suspected that she was suffering from illusions. Between these two latter theories subsequent ages have remained, in rather different proportions, divided.

Every age studies its predecessors in light supplied by itself. If we accepted our ancestors' explanations for what happened to them we should be forced to conclude that we were descended from either liars or lunatics. During most of the time he has been on earth man has explained what we call the natural by the supernatural; only rarely, as in the Golden Age of Greece and during the last three hundred years or so has he tended to explain what used to be called the supernatural by the natural. Even we are beginning to have our doubts, but until inquiry and proof have brought such things as Joan's visions within the laws of physical cause and effect, we shall find it impossible to believe that she really spoke with, saw, touched and smelt saints out of Paradise as she claimed. We must assume that her visions were subjective to her before they can become comprehensible to us, for so our minds are now made.

Yet by every familiar test, medical and historical, she was a healthy and rational person. A host of mental specialists, including some of the most famous of the last hundred years, have tried to diagnose her symptoms and have concluded with virtual unanimity that their science can make nothing of her. They find in her none of the classic symptoms of hallucination, hysteria or lesion of the brain; she never identified herself with her visions or lost control of her faculties under their influence,

as does the usual ecstatic; her heredity, so far as it is known, was sound, her body robust, her wit keen, her nervous composure unshakable except for an occasional healthy fit of temper. Even Anatole France, who thought her completely cracked, could get no more out of the eminent psychiatrist, Dr. Dumas, to whom he submitted the evidence, than the conclusion that "by her intelligence and will Joan remains sane and balanced, and nervous pathology can throw little light on her soul."

Clairvoyants and wizards were as common in the early fifteenth century as beggars and lice; most of them were out-and-out frauds, the rest belonged to clinically familiar categories. They fell into trances, starved and beat themselves, raved in gibberish at the street corners. When they had by these means recommended themselves to the public they proclaimed to have received cryptic messages from ghostly ladies or imaginary seers; and these communications nearly always purported to reveal ways of attaining instant Utopias, the whereabouts of lost property or short cuts into Heaven. Joan belongs with that ridiculous, pathetic, repulsive crew as little as do Luther or Cromwell, who were also hospitable to visions. What she saw (or thought that she saw) were definite personalities known to every Christian. What they had to say they said in a thoroughly rational and straightforward way; the things they bade her to do were, if tremendous, at least capable of being carried out by human means. When the time came she was able not only to translate her vision into action, but to account for the mechanism of her inspiration under an intensive examination by some of the best brains in Europe.

One has but to compare her with even the greatest

ecstatics of the late Middle Ages, such as Saint Catherine of Siena, to see how little she has in common even with them. Catherine too moved to convert a heavenly mission into an earthly achievement, by going to Avignon to bring the Pope back to Rome and so end the great schism of the West. But Catherine was an invalid from the day of her birth and received her revelations in a state of trance. She grew up loathing the world, joined an Order and spent most of her life in a cell, where she claimed (and this most impressed her contemporaries) to have gone through a literal ceremony of marriage with Christ and exhibited a ring as proof of the fact. These are precisely the classic symptoms of delusion and they were shared by every visionary of the time, saint as well as charlatan, except the peasant girl from Domrémy.

If she had shown at any time an inclination for the life of the cloister; if her meditations had centred upon her Saviour instead of upon two female saints (for Michael after the beginning came but rarely), one might perhaps suspect that she had something in common with the religious ecstatics whose sensual as well as spiritual cravings are consummated in the handsome, sorrowing figure of Jesus. But every fibre of Joan's nature cried for fierce, violent action; her God was not the gentle Saviour of the Cross but the King of Heaven, the Lord of battles—the name of Jesus is never mentioned as crossing her lips until the flames seared her flesh. It is true that she vowed her virginity (and kept her vow, as various pragmatic tests were to prove); she also made a rumpus whenever she spied one of her unchaste sisters in the vicinity of the army, and severely handled two gentlemen who tried to take liberties with her. But for all these

things she had excellent reasons to do with her mission and the discipline of the troops. Toward sex as such she had neither curiosity nor repulsion; nothing in her words or acts suggests that she would not have married like any ordinary woman had not the mission interfered at an age before most girls are very actively occupied with their bodies.

There is indeed a hint in the testimony of her squire Jean d'Aulon that she was physically abnormal—he had “heard from several women” that she was free of “the common malady of her sex.” It may have been true, but it sounds thin; moreover, this same Aulon testified at the same time that her breasts were full and well-formed—quite up to her years. In any event a late puberty at seventeen or eighteen throws very little light on the mind of the child to whom an angel appeared when she was twelve or thirteen.

Yet if the angel and the subsequent saints neither rose out of a diseased brain nor descended bodily from Heaven, where did they come from? If they were not real but the products of her imagination, out of what materials did her imagination create them? And why did they take the particular form they did?

The last question is really the important one. Mankind in general cannot think without the assistance of images. The savage represents his god in a totem or his soul as a tiny animal; we represent the atom by a billiard ball and electrical force by a wave. The medieval Christian conceived of God and the heavenly hierarchy as men and women in human likeness without physical bodies and tried to render that very difficult idea concrete to themselves by representing the celestial population in material wood and stone.



The Church, horrified at this perversion of its teachings, tried desperately to impress upon its charges the distinction between the spiritual saint in Heaven and his stone effigy in the church, but with no more success than attends the physicist who tries to make us discriminate between the atom and the billiard ball—or the adult who tries to make a child understand that the various Santa Clauses ringing a bell in the street are not the same as the one who comes down the chimney on Christmas Eve. It was too late: for over a thousand years the Church had been using the canonized dead as incarnations of the higher virtues and teaching that God's mercy was to be sought by their intercession. It had encouraged chapels to be built in their honour and images to be erected in their imaginary likenesses. It is no wonder that ordinary people presently came to regard the intermediaries to whom they addressed their prayers instead of the Master as the divinity by which the prayers would be answered, and in due course to endow the image of the saint with the attributes of the original. As always the concrete representation was substituted for the abstract reality.

And it was a terrific reality, this cult of the saints, saturating every activity of human life. Wherever one turned were their images, on every house, in every room, at every street-corner and market-place, over the shops and the common wells. As medals they were sold from door to door, to be worn in the pocket or round the neck. One did nothing, from eating a morsel of food or laying one's head on one's pillow to entering into the most important transactions of one's existence, without propitiating the saint through his image. Men and women impoverished themselves to join in the thousand

processions that ceaselessly wound over the miserable roads of Europe to one of the countless places made holy by a particular effigy or relic.

Wherever people gathered, whether for social or business purposes, their names might be heard shouted or muttered; they helped to bolster up a shady bargain, give emphasis to an oath and colour to emotions of incredulity and astonishment. In the narrow thronged streets of every medieval town were always to be seen, mingled with the motley civilian and military garments, the blacks, whites, browns and deep purples of the orders dedicated to one or other saintly founder, while here and there darted or grovelled a fanatic in the act of cultivating some obscure Venerable or Blessed whom even the most devout had never heard of. It was not uncommon to find people who tried to conform every minutest act, the food they ate and the way they ate it, the cut of their clothes and their colour, the bed they lay down on and the way it was placed, to the imagined teaching of a beatified patron. On great feast days and in times of public danger these scattered energies were for a moment concentrated: then the figure of the saint whose turn it was for special veneration or whose job it was to defend the community from harm was taken out of his church or chapel and carried through the streets in a blaze of pageantry between kneeling figures to the clanging of the church bells.

The intention underneath all this elaborate flummery was, of course, the oldest and simplest in the world—to cajole the invisible powers into granting favours and keeping away trouble. It was the same motive that led primitive peoples to stick pins into their enemies' effigies or perform carnal rites over the young corn to encourage

it to fertility. We ourselves knock on wood or turn the portraits of the dead to the wall—only without quite knowing why nor with the same happy confidence in the results. For simpler people the danger in this sort of mumbo-jumbo is that it seems to work. In the great majority of cases illness does end in recovery, the rain comes, the corn grows, the enemy somehow or other may fail to materialize; undoubtedly sufferers from fever were cured after dipping in the waters of the Fairy Spring and clever men grew rich with a bit of mandragora root concealed in their bosoms. The magic, the spirit or the saint, as the case might be, had proved his or its virtue again and it entered nobody's head that all those desirable results would have happened in any event and for quite other reasons.

With this in mind one is a little better able to understand the extraordinary hallucinations of the Middle Ages as well as the frequent hopelessness of trying to make sense out of its chronicles. There are two good examples out of Joan's own career, the death of the Earl of Salisbury at the beginning and the repair of the bridge over the Loire at the end of the siege of Orleans. The townsfolk knew that a cannon-ball from a certain quarter had struck the English commander, but the gun that fired the lucky shot was not identified; their account-books still show that they put down every penny of the cost of repairs, but in rushing to the attack they did not pause to make sure that the planks were really long enough for the gap to be crossed. So they recorded that a superhuman hand had pointed the gun and that the planking had remained suspended in air without support, "miracles performed at the request of Saint Aignan and Saint Euverte," the patrons of the city. No wonder that

the chroniclers were not unduly worried by armies of 1300 men that sustained casualties exceeding 2000, or that marched out of a town several days before marching into it. If anyone had happened to point out the discrepancies he would have been satisfied with the explanation that that sort of thing was all in the day's work for the particular saint in whose department the matter fell.

This system of belief, common to the whole of the later Middle Ages, was heightened in the first half of the fifteenth century by a religious tension that is without parallel in history. The atmosphere was as overheated as that of a revivalist meeting in full blast, and a good deal more dangerous. Over forty generations of men had lived and died in the belief that Christianity would bring peace and goodwill to the earth; and this, the latest, realized with bitterness that the reign of Christ was if anything further off than ever. Especially in France, where the people of that generation lived in the agony of a war that had gone on for nearly a hundred years and might easily go on for a hundred more, they saw only want, the brutal cruelty of the strong to the weak, the inhuman oppression of the poor by the rich. They could not know that they were in the grip of new and mighty economic forces, on the threshold of an age that was to be among the most brilliant ever seen on earth; and it would have been poor comfort if they had. It never entered their heads to blame their troubles on the Faith they had been taught, any more than it would enter ours to doubt the truth of material science merely because it had failed to rid the world of injustice, greed and suffering—as once we hoped it might. It was themselves they cursed, and their rulers, whose disregard

of God's word had put them in their miserable state; and drew the conclusion that since things seemed to be getting no better, and men certainly were not, the day of judgment was in sight.

The conviction that the end of the world was near pervaded all classes of society from the slums to the Vatican. It was discussed in the great councils of Christendom and thundered from episcopal pulpits. Vagrant preachers could collect thousands to listen for hours on end to variations on this theme, and send them to make bonfires of their finery and cosmetics, dice and cards, or to join pilgrimages in a frantic last-minute clutch at salvation. Probably in their heart of hearts these terrified people did not really believe it—the end of the world is as impossible for the normal person to contemplate as his own death. But they did seriously believe that if whatever was good in human life were to survive the existing state of things, God Himself would have to intervene, and that His intervention would naturally be contrived through His saints. Subjected to such furious, unremitting and universal pressure it would have been surprising if some of the saints had not now and then done what was expected of them.

Joan was a Christian of her time; rather more Christian and less of her time than most, one may think as one watches her judges draw the very soul out of her, break it into its component fragments, weigh them bit by bit. But no child of twelve or thirteen, and precious few adults, ever step out of the circle of ideas in which they have been educated. From the moment she could think she had been assured by priest and parent, by every human being in whom she had confidence, of the objective reality of the angels and saints and of their habit of

revealing themselves to mortals for their own purposes. She could no more have doubted those assurances than a modern child doubts its elders when they tell it that the sun is larger than the earth, though its own experience not only fails to prove the fact but flatly contradicts it. She would not have been conscious of the source of her beliefs: no one is conscious of the origins of his fundamental ideas. She "had the will to believe," as she declared to her judges, and in that phrase bared the mainspring of the system of thought which they and their kind had been inculcating (rightly perhaps, but that is not the point) since the foundation of her and their Church.

It was noon of a hot summer's day when the angel first appeared, an hour when the physical senses are most likely to be lulled into abeyance; how many quite ordinary people have not had strange illusions in those conditions. The sun was blazing down, the sound of the church-bells would just have died away against the neighbouring hills (the experience is still to be had in Domrémy). The little girl, standing rapt and still in the garden, heard something oddly personal in the musical echo and in the dazzling light her eyes discerned a vague and radiant outline. Her mind was filled with the images of those daily companions from a heaven so real that beside it the world round her often had by comparison only the quality of a dream; anyone who has ever studied the mind of a deeply religious child will readily understand the texture of hers. She gave the experience the name of her thought, and that was the first vision.

Some of her judges suspected as much, and so the wisest of them, the doctors who were directly entrusted

with her examination, shrewdly asked her whether she heard the Voices best when the bells sounded and saw them in the form of the painted stone images in the church. They probed even deeper and tried to discover whether she had been fasting immediately before the Voices came to her. To the last question she answered no, though there is some confusion in the text. She also denied any connection between the Voices and the bells, but the denial only applied to later occasions, after she left Domrémy, and by then it was certainly true that she could summon the Voices by an act of will.

As to their appearance she never gave a straight answer, and for the simple reason that she was unable to. She had identified her visitors by an inward prompting based upon deep psychological processes that can be traced to the legends she had been taught and the sculptured likenesses she had so long and intently gazed upon. Those effigies had given body, so to speak, to the figments of her imagination; no child finds it possible utterly to disbelieve in anything of which it has seen a picture. But she was too old, and far too intelligent, to take the likeness for the literal reality—though many of her contemporaries had no trouble in doing so. She never expected the Voices to have the same bodily members and to wear the same clothes as people on earth; why should they when their business with her was of an entirely different sort? As long as she knew they were there and could understand their messages why should she gape at their legs or the cut of their garments? So that when the judges brought these matters to her conscious thought she simply shrugged their questions aside with disdain or parried them with those ironic counter-questions that are still such a joy to read. It is

interesting to notice, however, that she was far more specific about the two lady saints who had once been human beings like herself (or so she thought) than about the archangel.

She had the will to believe, but she also had a lot of rugged peasant common sense. If there was no good reason why angels should not in general come down out of Heaven, there were many why they should not choose her, Joan the peasant girl, to reveal themselves to. Feeling herself unworthy she could only explain it on the ground that "it had pleased God to use a simple maid" for the great work He had in mind. After the first visit she was still full of doubt: it was the angel's continuing to come that convinced her. How could she guess that she had evoked him out of her "will to believe" because he left her "greatly comforted," so much so that she had yearned to have him take her with him? It would have been extraordinary had she not tried to repeat the experience in the same circumstances—and with the same results. She knew that the angel was good because his voice was "of heavenly gentleness," because he bade her persist in these acts of devotion which brought her comfort; he promised her personal salvation after death and a life of high chivalrous endeavour—the two deepest longings of her being. Yet even so she hung back, conscious of her lack of preparation for what she was commanded, and so greatly desired, to do: "I am only a poor girl who knows neither to ride nor to make war." Probably it was such doubts as those she wrestled with during the years before she set forth. Characteristically she set herself to learn both arts in a thoroughly practical way when the chance came.

The very identity of the Voices seem to support this



theory of their origin by psychological preparation. The archangel Michael was, in France, the most revered of the heavenly hierarchy after the Trinity and the Virgin Mary. He was the patron saint of the struggling Valois dynasty and had evolved into the acting patron of the whole country. Whereas Saint Denis, the accredited national patron, had somewhat lamely allowed his shrine outside Paris to be captured, Michael had gallantly defended his in Normandy against the most furious assaults of the English. Hope and patriotism were kept alive in the hearts of many Frenchmen by the thought of the Lily still proudly flying in the far depths of the English conquest on the rocky Mount of Saint Michael-in-Peril-of-the-Sea. It was a bit of astute insight on the part of one of Joan's judges to ask her why it was not Saint Denis rather than Michael who announced her mission to her; and it is interesting to notice that she denies having seen Gabriel, the archangel whom God traditionally entrusted with His announcements to mortals. Above all what France most needed from Heaven was a soldier, and it was of Michael, commander of the celestial hosts, conqueror of Satan, that the prophet Daniel had said: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered. . . ." If ever the time had come for France it was then.

His winged figure stood against a pillar in the church of Domrémy. Facing him was, and still is, Saint Margaret, protector of women and especially peasants, who died to protect her chastity from the lecherous governor of Antioch, Olibrius. The church of Maxey on the opposite

bank of the river was dedicated to Catherine, the royal virgin of Alexandria who had refused to surrender her faith on the order of the Roman emperor Maxentius and died horribly as a result. She was the patron of young girls, particularly of the poor and those who spun, though the philosophers had adopted her also because of her triumphant refutation of the fifty pagan sages sent to argue with her. Her cult was perhaps more popular in the neighbourhood of Domrémy than that of any other saint except the Madonna herself.

During the whole of those three or four years Joan confided her revelations to no one, not even her confessor or her parents. It is a remarkable fact, considering her age; it was to be a damning fact at her trial. By the Church's code she was bound to ask priestly advice on the authenticity and nature of the Voices: but the extraordinary girl considered herself capable of judging the reality of her own experiences and of determining for herself, from the fact that the unearthly messengers made her no sinful offers, that they came from God rather than from Satan. It was her own common sense, not the Voices, that ordered her silence: the reason she gave for it was that she feared to be impeded in her mission by her father or the Burgundian sympathizers in the neighbourhood. Very likely she dreaded also to be laughed at, scolded, argued with in the early stage of perplexity, and by the time that was resolved the Voices had become an essential part of her, as impossible to doubt (she said it herself) as that her judges sat before her or that Christ had died for the salvation of humanity.

But she was bursting with her secret, and despite her fears she could not quite manage to keep it entirely to herself. In June of 1428 she said to Michael Lebuin, a

friend of her own age, "There is, 'twixt Coussey and Vaucouleurs,<sup>1</sup> a girl who before the year is up, will have the King of France anointed." She was wrong by less than a month. A little later she said to Gerardin d'Epinal, "Compère,<sup>2</sup> if you weren't a Burgundian I would tell you something." He thought it was merely a coy hint at her pending marriage, about which there was current talk in the village, and did not pursue the matter further. Some intimation must have reached her father's ears even earlier, for two years after the first vision he had had a dream in which he saw his daughter going off with the soldiers. The idea naturally distressed him, because in the ordinary way girls who went off with soldiers did not do so on the advice of angels. He called his sons to him and said, "If I believed that my dream would come true I would have you drown her; and if you refused I would do it myself." Unless one assumes that clairvoyance was more than usually common in the d'Arc family there must have already been a certain amount of gossip in the neighbourhood, and the only possible source of it was Joan herself.

Perhaps it was his nightmare that determined Jacques d'Arc to get his daughter married off. We know nothing of the young man selected except that he was probably a childhood friend, to judge by a suggestion of Gerardin d'Epinal's. She refused to go through with the ceremony and in the summer of 1428 her fiancé cited her to appear before the ecclesiastical court at Toul, which had certain powers of compulsion in such matters. The summons was served on her at Neufchâteau, whither she had fled

<sup>1</sup> Goussey is about two miles to the south of Domrémy, and Vaucouleurs about seven to the north.

<sup>2</sup> A title used to the father of a child by its god-parent.

with her family during the second raid on Domrémy. She went to Toul, gave her evidence under oath and apparently talked the judge over, for we hear no more of the matter. That she did all this in disobedience to her parents she admitted at Rouen, where her prosecutors presented her with an extraordinarily different version of the story.

Soon she was to disobey them again, in a far more important matter. That autumn she decided that the time had come for her to present herself to her king and assume, on the strength of her divine credentials, responsibility for the victory of his arms. What finally decided her we can only guess. The war, which had languished for nearly three years, because of England's internal difficulties, had suddenly burst out with renewed fury. The English armies were active in nearby Champagne and pushing south threatening to cut the line of the Loire so as to clear the Dauphin out of his last remnant of territory. Simultaneously the Voices grew more frequent, more insistent, irresistible.

The mission became everything, overruling every doubt, hesitation and scruple. Though keenly alive to the pain she would inflict on her parents, she resolutely went ahead with her plans; and knowing that her father would prevent her going if he suspected, she cunningly deceived him. "Since God commanded it," she told her judges when they drew her attention to the Fifth Commandment, "I would have gone had I had a hundred fathers and mothers, had I been the daughter of the King." Breaking her vow of silence she confided her intention to Durand Laxart, whom she called "Uncle" on account of his seniority, though he was only the husband of a maternal cousin, and completely imposed her will

upon him. Laxart told Jacques d'Arc that his wife needed Joan's help during a coming confinement and was allowed to take her to his farm at Burey, a village on the way to Vaucouleurs. She left with him in January 1429 and never saw Domrémy again.

## NOTE

Practically all of Joan's historians have accepted, and repeated, the story that she made a previous visit to Robert de Baudricourt under Laxart's auspices in May of 1428. It seems to me to be based on extremely inconclusive evidence. Joan stated at her trial that her stay with her uncle lasted eight days; he declared to the Commissioners of the Rehabilitation that she was with him six weeks all together; and from this discrepancy it has been inferred that there must have been two visits, of which Joan referred only to one. Against this must be set the fact that neither Joan nor Laxart in their testimony remotely suggest that there were two visits; that Laxart was testifying after twenty-seven years, when he might have been confusing the time that he was with Joan *all together*, during part of her stay at Vaucouleurs and the journey to Nancy mentioned in the next chapter; and that it is highly improbable that he could have got her away from home twice when they had to resort to a ruse to get her away even once.

Another witness at the Rehabilitation, Bertrand de Poulengy, deposed that she came to Vaucouleurs "toward the time of the Ascension of Our Lord," saw Baudricourt and returned with Laxart to her father's house. This is the only specific reference to a visit in the spring of 1428. But again it must be remembered that Poulengy was speaking after many years; he could not have known whether Joan returned to Burey or Domrémy with Laxart; and when he says that "later" she returned to Vaucouleurs, at the beginning of Lent, it certainly sounds as if he meant a week or two rather than after nearly nine months.

All the probabilities are against Poulengy's statement. Jean de Metz who, with him, escorted Joan to Chinon, not only says nothing of an earlier visit but by his testimony renders such a visit impossible. Both witnesses make Joan stress the importance of being with the king before mid-Lent of 1429, so, it must seem, they are both referring to the same interview; but Jean de Metz continues her con-

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versation with Baudricourt and has her refer to the engagement between the future Louis XI and the Princess Margaret of Scotland, which took place October 30th, 1428. And it cannot be stressed too often that it was the siege of Orleans, begun earlier that same month, that set Joan on the road to Vaucouleurs.

None of the witnesses from Domrémy mentions two visits, though many clearly recall Joan's departure for Neufchâteau in the summer of 1428. The only exception was Jean Morel, her godfather, who heard that she had gone *three times*. And the le Royers, in whose house she stayed at Vaucouleurs, would almost certainly have recalled if she had come on the same incredible errand in May, been dismissed and returned again the following January.

## CHAPTER III

### VAUCOULEURS

"It is God's will that I go into France, to the Dauphin, to have him crowned," was the form in which Joan announced her mission to Durand Laxart. Taken all in all it is about as astounding an announcement as any human being ever made to another. Why did Durand Laxart take it so seriously that he lent himself to a deception which was bound to involve him in serious trouble with her parents? Why did he not tell her that she was raving and ought to be locked up? Or even remind her that all the royal armies had for six years proved unable to keep the Dauphin and his crown from drifting further apart? Or at least point out that she was barely seventeen, and a girl at that, who could not write her own name and had never been over a dozen miles from home in all her life? And if Durand was exceptionally gullible (though his contemporaries seem to have considered him a man of average hard head) why did the inhabitants of Vaucouleurs, when the pair turned up in the town a week or two later, not hoot these questions after them in the streets?

If any of these things had happened, Joan of Arc would probably have withered of old age as a peasant's wife instead of burning as a heroine and martyr at nineteen. Without the whole-hearted faith of her cousin and the town of Vaucouleurs the mission must have collapsed at

the outset, not only through lack of means to carry it on to its next and most critical stage, but of something far more important, a touchstone—for how could she hope to convince a nation when she could not even convince her neighbours?

What silenced doubt and stifled those questions was that the coming of Joan had been prepared by prophecy. "Has it not been said," she demanded of Laxart while he hesitated in open-mouthed wonder at her, "that through a woman would France be desolated and through a woman restored?" It had indeed been said, and broadcast, by a holy woman called Mary of Avignon, to the late Charles VI, father of the Dauphin; everybody knew that the first allusion was to Charles' scandalous consort, the hated Isabella of Bavaria, who had denounced her own son as a bastard and invited the English to deprive him of his birthright. But what Joan's neighbours were the first to suspect was that the woman to fulfil the second half of the prophecy had been indicated long before, in a celebrated writing attributed to the wizard Merlin by Geoffrey of Monmouth and miraculously confirmed by a cryptogram of the Venerable Bede—who were all one as far as the populace were concerned.

"A wonder-working Virgin will come from the *Nemus Canutum* for the restoration of the nations," ran the prophecy of Merlin. The *Nemus Canutum*—the *Bois Chenu* of Domrémy—in the logic of the Middle Ages the syllogism was complete. Throughout that countryside the two had long been identified, though the learned might have pointed out that Merlin must have been referring to a grove in the land of Joan's enemies—if he had, in fact, referred to anything at all. But those peasants and towns-



folk of the Meuse valley were not captious; also they were rather proud that fate's mysterious choice should have fallen in their own midst, and probably glad that she should have been the daughter of a substantial husbandman known to them rather than a nobody from nowhere.

"Through a woman would France be desolated and *restored again by a Virgin of the Lorraine Marches.*" The words are still Joan's, but quoted now by Catherine, wife of Henry le Royer, in whose house she lodged at Vaucouleurs. "I did indeed recall this prophecy and stood dumbfounded," added Catherine simply. . . .

Many years afterward the inhabitants of the town still spoke with deep affection of the soft-voiced girl in the shabby dress of red homespun who appeared in their midst for help in her amazing errand. They recalled her pitching in to help with the le Royers' housework and going to the crypt of an old ruined chapel to be alone in her devotions; they remembered the quiet candour of her responses, so unlike the fury and the bombast of the professional visionary, when they plied her with their curious questions. "I must go to the gentle Dauphin," she explained to Henry le Royer, "since it is the will of my Lord the King of Heaven . . ." and to Jean de Novelompont, or de Metz, a young man of thirty and her first disciple amongst the soldiers, "Before mid-Lent I must be with the king even if I have to wear my legs down to the knees. For no one on earth, whether kings, dukes, nor the King of Scotland's daughter <sup>1</sup> nor any other can help the realm of France; there is no help

<sup>1</sup> The Dauphin's son, aged five, had recently become engaged to the three year old daughter of James I of Scotland, an alliance from which the Dauphin entertained exaggerated expectations.

but through me, though I had far rather stay with my poor mother,<sup>1</sup> for there (at court) is not my station. . . ." Everything she said—the quotations could be multiplied indefinitely—had that quiet confidence, like an inner light shining outward. Everyone remarked on it, and it must have been oddly soothing in that nerve-wracked age. One also suspects that there must have been something doubly impressive to those people in the bearer of a mission from Heaven who took no trouble to win converts. Her own conviction was so strong that she never cared whether others shared it or not, so long as they did not get in her way: when her judges asked her whether those of her own side believed that she was sent by God she answered with superb indifference, "I know not what they believe and leave it to their consciences."

Her conquest of Vaucouleurs was not only a triumph for the old prophecies but for her own personality—that elusive quality which has made so much history and which history is so utterly unable to recapture.

There was something else as well, however, something in the message itself that she bore, which struck straight and deep into the hearts of common people. It comes out first in the testimony of Bertrand de Poulengy, a soldier of thirty-six who succumbed to her spell as did Jean de Metz, and like him pledged his word that with God's help they would lead her to the king: "The realm belongs not to the Dauphin but to God, who wishes the Dauphin to be made king and to hold the realm from Him."

<sup>1</sup> Joan was considerably distressed by her desertion of her parents and wrote home (by a scribe, of course) to ask forgiveness; it was granted by letter, therefore apparently before she met her father again for the last time at Rheims in July.

As a political idea it was neither original nor very practical, but the same can be said of most political ideas that have swept men into achieving things that were beyond their power. Joan borrowed it unconsciously from the common stock of her age, found authority and example for it in the legendary tales that passed currently for history, and gave it shape and language in her own meditations. She could hardly have guessed that it was already out of date and in a hundred years would be archaic. Society in general no more realized as yet that the feudal structure which had housed it for centuries was hopelessly decayed than the Orders of Knighthood suspected that the chivalry which was their reason for being had degenerated into a code of miserable poses. On the contrary, the only escape that most men could conceive from the anarchy in which they lived was to the imagined purity of the old institutions, when every man gave loyal service to his superior and received fair dealing in return, with a king responsible directly to God for the just working of the system. Nowhere was that ideal more hungrily cherished than in France, the birthplace alike of feudalism and chivalry, and it was precisely in France that ordinary people could no longer say with certainty who *was* their proper sovereign. Where then was hope to be found? In God's intention, answered Joan with prophetic conviction, to invest the true king with the crown and exact of him in return the high duties attaching to it.

"And how long will the crown last?" asked the judges at Rouen, in another connection.

"A thousand years and more," she answered, "his royal seigneurie will endure so long as true faith and justice shall prevail in the realm."

That was the language of patriotism on its highest level, the language of a poet expressing the longings of a race in terms of its loftiest memories. No wonder she kindled in her hearers a wild hope that they might yet witness glories which seemed to have departed for ever.

One man in Vaucouleurs did, nevertheless, manage to stand out against her, and he, unfortunately, was the very man she could not do without, Robert de Baudricourt, captain of the town by inheritance and its master in the king's name. On her arrival Joan at once sent the obedient Durand to him with a statement of her purpose and a request for men, horses and arms. Baudricourt, less astonished than impatient (perhaps he had had a long experience of world-saving cranks), cut short Durand's petition with the advice, repeated several times for emphasis, "to take her back to her father and tell him from me to give her a sound thrashing."

In fairness to Robert it must be said that no man could have been more justified at that moment in refusing to bother his head with dubious females endorsed by dead and buried mages. He had his hands full enough as it was in that difficult frontier outpost, what with greedy barons all round shouting that the tributes he paid them were too small, the inhabitants grumbling that their taxes were too high, and the English gathering in Champagne to swoop down on him from one moment to the next. Only by the most adroit use of force, cunning and a fortune derived from marrying two rich widows in succession had he been able to hold on so long, and he could reasonably flatter himself that few men in the kingdom had done their duty better than had he in that remote shred of it. But the king's coronation and God's in-

tentions were matters of high policy quite off his beat: the business of the politicians and the priests, not of an overworked soldier and administrator. And it all sounded like nonsense, anyhow.

Yet, of course, he saw her. A will that had overridden family obstruction and would soon batter down stone walls was not to be frustrated by the bluster of a single individual who had not yet even been informed of the rôle Heaven had cast him for. What made him change his mind we do not know. Perhaps his curiosity got the better of him; perhaps he thought it impolitic to snub the daughter of a tax-payer too outrageously.

The various stories of what was said at that first meeting between the worldly middle-aged official and the persistent girl in the shapeless red dress are somewhat confused. Baudricourt was apparently in company when Joan entered, for she says that she picked him out by the prompting of the Voices though she had never seen him before; on the other hand she states he was the only man, except the king, whom she ever told of the Voices, so they must have been alone at least part of the time. Poulengy, who was present, has her begin with the request to be sent into France and then diverge into her exposition of theocratic feudalism as quoted above. But Poulengy's recollection is blurred, with no sequence and often no way of telling who is speaking.

If the age was weak on evidence it was strong on moral. The following account, taken from a chronicle written twenty years or more later, is an interesting illustration of how each incident of Joan's life was shaped by her contemporaries to conform to the requirements of didactic legend. "Sir Captain," she began, "you must know that God ordered me, some time ago and on various occasions,

to go to the gentle Dauphin, who is by right the true king of France, that he may give me soldiers whereby I may raise the siege of Orleans and bring him to be crowned at Rheims."

Now, of course, she never said all that in a single breath; she would not have been allowed to, for one thing. But the medieval chronicler is seldom worried by such details: in order to get on to his lesson he condenses conversation into a series of set speeches, at times covering pages. And when the exact arguments of the parties are missing he has no hesitation in lending them suitable ones. Joan and Poulengy say no more than that Baudricourt turned her down, but our chronicler, dissatisfied with so tame a conclusion, has him break into shouts of derisive laughter, tell her that "it was all a dream and fantasy" of a disordered intellect, and offer to satisfy her craving for a military career by giving her employment more suitable to her sex among his own soldiers. This sort of thing was, as everybody knew, always happening to saints. The soldiers, when the suggestion was conveyed to them, one and all candidly admitted that the mere sight of her chilled their virility. That miracle was to be repeated innumerable times within the next few months: apparently the hard-boiled veterans of the Hundred Years' War flinched at fleshly intimacy with a young woman, however desirable otherwise, who already enjoyed the intimacy of Heaven.

However he got rid of her it was not for long. She came again, and yet again, and presently he recognized that she would not take no, in whatever form stated, for an answer. And he was no longer quite so sure of himself . . . what if by any chance she was telling the truth . . .

as apparently everybody but he believed . . . if they were right and he wrong it was a terrible responsibility he was taking . . . certainly the Dauphin stood in need of extra-human help if any prince ever had . . . but to send her to court without permission called for more nerve than he possessed. The harassed man, torn in two directions, took both: he passed the matter of her ultimate disposition on to higher authority at Chinon and called in a priest to advise him on the validity of Joan's spiritual claims.

The priest was Jean Fournier, curé of the church Joan attended with the le Royers. The two men called on her together and found her weaving in Catherine's company. They asked her to come with them into another room, where the priest put on his stole and solemnly pronounced in Latin the awful adjuration to the possessed: "If thou be an evil thing, depart from us; if a good, be suffered to approach. . . ." It was a formula that only the most obstinate witches could resist. Joan went up to Fournier, fell on her knees and reproached him quite as much in anger as in sorrow for doubting one whom he had heard in confession. Then she ran off to pour her indignation into her hostess's sympathetic ears, while Robert left not very much wiser than when he came.

It was to be Joan's misfortune throughout her brief career to have to submit to tests like Baudricourt's; she spent nearly half her wonderful two years satisfying the scruples of dawdling politicians and sceptical ecclesiastics. So much to do, so little time to do it in, and that little frittered away in meaningless delay, as it seemed to her. She knew by some instinct that her time was very short—"One year and a little more," she predicted, and actually only fifteen months of freedom yet remained

to her. Throughout January and February the news was coming in that Orleans was nearing the end of its resistance, and it took neither voices from heaven nor the imagination of genius to foresee that the fall of the heroic town would be the end of everything. Despite Joan's private assurance that Robert *must* in the end do what she asked, phrases now and then escaped her to betray how keenly those weeks of waiting tried her soul. When Jean de Metz, carried out of himself by her enthusiasm, offered to travel the long and dangerous road alone with her if need be, and asked when she wanted to leave, she cried eagerly, "Rather to-day than to-morrow, rather to-morrow than later." And to her confidante Catherine le Royer she sighed, "The time weighs upon me as on a woman waiting to be delivered of child."

Yet in a sense the delay was of her own choice. Before Baudricourt made up his mind Bertrand de Poulengy had added his pledge to Jean de Metz's, and the people of Vaucouleurs were ready to provide her with what she needed for the journey; nevertheless she still waited on the irresolute Robert. If asked to explain she would have said (later she did, in so many words) that since the Voices had promised her Robert's co-operation it would have been presumption for her to have acted without it. In that case we can only admire the Voices' good sense. How would the courtiers at Chinon have received an illiterate girl, recommended to them by nobody but herself and a banal popular superstition, who rode up with the quaint demand that she be instantly provided with troops to raise the siege of Orleans? Probably with the whipping prescribed by Robert followed by an unceremonious return to her father; it is hard to



imagine that she would have been allowed to see the Dauphin except through the bars of a detention cell. It is not without humour that when Joan saw the chance to obtain satisfactory backing other than Robert's, she snatched at it quite forgetful of the fact that he held the Voices' exclusive appointment.

It was toward the middle of February that she received an invitation to visit the Duke of Lorraine in his capital at Nancy; with it came a safe-conduct, but no intimation of what the Duke wanted of her. Without the least hesitation she set out to walk the twenty-odd miles, the faithful Durand accompanying her most and Jean de Metz part of the way. None of the three, nor anyone else in Vaucouleurs, seems to have seen anything at all unusual in the peasant's child receiving such a summons from a prince of the Holy Roman Empire—what the age took for granted is at least as astonishing as what took it by surprise.

When Joan arrived she found that her august host wished to consult her about his health, which was bad; having heard that she was endowed with supernatural powers he was hopeful that she could suggest a treatment. Joan stoutly denied the impeachment, as she was to go on denying it—much good it would do her!—all her short life. She was willing, however, to pray to God to cure the Duke's ailments if the Duke would lend her his son-in-law, who was present, and a company of soldiers, to bring her into France.

One wonders whether the Voices would have sanctioned this proposition *post facto* had the Duke been in a position to accept it. Unfortunately he was not: the welfare, even the life of his House depended very largely on its alliances with the very enemies whom it was Joan's

mission to defeat, while his son-in-law, René of Anjou, though his sister was the Dauphin's wife, only held his own Duchy of Bar on the sufferance of that same Anglo-Burgundian power. The visit ended, therefore, in mutual disappointment, but the Duke sent his guest away with four gold francs to defray the expenses of her journey and a black horse to carry her home. Just five months later Duke René—"the good King René" of Provençal song—would be following the victorious banner of his father-in-law's odd visitor.

She returned to find that the weeks of waiting were over. Baudricourt had given way, the escort was ready. What made him change his mind we do not know—had he but lived to testify at the Rehabilitation he could have cleared up much regarding Joan that must be forever dark. Some say that Joan had told him on February 12th of a terrible disaster being sustained by French arms on a distant field even while she spoke, and that in her absence a king's messenger arrived with the news of the Battle of the Herrings, by which Orleans was very nearly lost. All we know for certain is that the king's messenger did arrive, and it is perhaps more probable that he brought a letter authorizing Robert to forward his troublesome petitioner on to Chinon. He was relieved but not converted, as his parting words to her show.

There were a few days of busy preparation. The inhabitants of Vaucouleurs had a suit of men's clothes made for her, all in black and grey—a tight-fitting leather jacket laced up the front, a short loose tunic of heavy wool, woollen hose attached to the jacket by twenty laces and eyelets, pointed boots of soft leather with spurs, and a hat in the form of a scarf that could be wound round the head with the ends hanging over the shoulders.

She had her hair cut short in the manner of the time, like a round cap fitting the skull above the level of the ears. Baudricourt gave her a horse—perhaps purchased before she turned up on the Duke's—that cost twelve francs, according to Laxart, though Jean de Metz, who is very grudging about Robert's part in the enterprise, says that other people gave it and that it cost sixteen. At any rate Baudricourt presented her with a sword and the townsfolk completed her equipment with a dagger and a simple breastplate of padded cloth. The ensemble transformed her into an ordinary medieval page following his master to the wars.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, February 23rd, 1429, she set out with her little company—Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Metz, in the bright harness of gentlemen-at-arms; their two servants, dressed in the colours of their masters' respective houses and carrying aloft their gay pennons; Colet de Vienne, the king's messenger, to whom this was very likely a tiresome journey in line of duty like any other; and Richard the archer, of whom we know no more than his name, probably a common bowman returning to service after leave and destined to perish in some evil-smelling moat. Thronging behind until they passed westward out of the Gate of France were the people of Vaucouleurs, infected with Joan's own exaltation yet frightened of the dangers from flood and armed bands that awaited her little company in the hostile country ahead. "How can you achieve such a journey," one called out, "with men of war on all sides?"

"I do not fear men of war," responded the small figure in grey, "for my way lies straight before me; if I meet them I have God, who will open the road

for me to my lord the Dauphin. *For this task was I born.*"

Robert de Baudricourt shook his head and muttered non-committally as he took leave of her, "Go, go, and come what may." It is a pity that they never met again so that she might have reminded him of this, and of other things.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHINON TO BLOIS

NEARLY four hundred miles lay between the seven travellers and their destination, an unbroken third of them and more on hostile soil. Each day the little party rested in a wood or a ruin (there was no lack of either) and in the long dark February nights picked their way through forests and icy rivers swollen with winter floods, preferring the worst perils of nature to the murderous freebooters casually attached—very casually—to the Anglo-Burgundian armies. Even the nerves of those sturdy veterans Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Metz began to waver under the hardship and strain: "Will you do as you say?" they asked her anxiously, and with serene voice she replied, "Fear not, what I do is by command!" Some quality in her as she spoke fortified those six followers as it was soon to electrify ten thousand; they called it "the divine love that was in her"; it might equally be called the natural power of command. "Hearing her speak thus I was uplifted," says Poulengy, ". . . for me she came from God." Her companions looked on that successful passage from the Meuse to the Loire as a miracle, and as a miracle it was proclaimed through France and beyond, but for Joan there was nothing remarkable about it: "I came to my king without hindrance," is her own laconic description to her judges, of those days and nights of bitter discomfort and desperate vigilance.

Her own worries were of another sort. She had vowed her virginity till the mission was achieved: if she were deprived of it earlier she might well find herself in Samson's predicament. So when she lay down to sleep, between de Metz and Poulengy, she wrapped her cloak tightly about her and did not undo for comfort, as was customary, the laces that fastened her lower garments to her upper. It was not that she did not trust her two cavaliers, but she had a pretty good working knowledge of the other sex and was not taking unnecessary chances. In point of fact she was perfectly safe: "She inspired such respect in me that I would never have dared solicit her for evil," says Jean de Metz, "and I can truly swear that I never had an evil thought or carnal impulse toward her." She was not to be desired as a woman till she came amongst men who declined to see her as a saint—and by that time her mission in this world was ended.

Her acutest distress, greater than any bodily discomfort, was her inability to practise her devotions. It was not until they reached Auxerre, near the Anglo-Burgundian frontier, that she felt it safe to slip into the Cathedral to hear Mass, one of the few events of those eleven days that she picked out for special mention. It was a high moment of the journey in two senses, for a few hours later she was looking for the first time on the kingdom she had come to restore.

Restore to what? What picture did the word "France" conjure up in Joan's mind and how did it differ from the dismembered realm to which she came? The difference was not one of boundaries, for she had never seen a map: in fact there were none to see except the naïve fantasies drawn by monks in moments of cartographical reverie.

Even the wisest could not have traced for her the national frontiers either ancient or modern, for the former were forgotten and the latter, owing to the war, in a state of constant flux. Joan thought of France merely as that particular community of men and women which owed obedience to Charles of Valois. If she did not know the names of the mountains or seas that determined the limits of that obedience, she knew, with burning indignation, that it should be so, that the Champagne she had ridden through was not English nor the Burgundy she had just left a foreign state, but that both were inhabited by people who spoke the same tongue as she and revered the same traditions. Perhaps one comes nearest the truth if one tries to conceive of Joan's France as something neither geographical nor political but as an idea in the mind of God given concrete expression on earth.

But if God had created the realm of France according to a plan of His own devising, why had He allowed it to be so shockingly mutilated? To the medieval mind the answer came pat as it would have to the Biblical. For its sins of pride, gluttony, sloth, covetousness and sensuality had God sent the English to chastise it, declared Charles Duke of Orleans, whose capital Joan had come to save, in one of the poems with which he whiled away his twenty-five years of captivity in the Tower of London. "It is not I who have done this killing!" exclaimed Henry V as he surveyed the heaped-up corpses "naked as new-born babes" on the field of Agincourt, "but almighty God for the sins of the French." The king did less than justice, perhaps, to his own part in the business, while the Duke (who was taken in the battle) was more than courteous not to mention the comparative pride,

gluttony, and covetousness of the victors; but both would have felt it incongruous to look for the cause of so impressive an event anywhere nearer than Heaven.

Joan, too, when her judges asked her whether God did not love the English when they were prospering, replied that she did not know but that she believed He wished to punish the French for their sins by letting them be beaten. But—and here she differed from the orthodox opinion of her age—she was certain that He was now proposing to punish the English for the greater sin of invading a country which was not theirs. Since, however, the English came as instruments of God's chastisement—luckily she was not called upon to unravel that theological tangle.

The origins of the war were already lost in the haze of antiquity, and its material causes were as obscure to the contemporary mind as the emotional explanations for it are baffling to ours. We think in terms of property, commerce, politics: of the broad provinces in the angle between the Atlantic and the Pyrenees that Eleanor of Aquitaine brought to Henry II of England, and of the impossibility of two great powers existing co-equally, even on a feudal basis, within the same frontiers; of the clash of commercial interests in Flanders; of the more highly developed political state of England and the temptation offered by the greater wealth of France. The Middle Ages saw the struggle in terms of dynastic rivalry and the pride of kings, of feudal homage inadequately rendered, of a mystic claim through the maternal blood of the English King to the French crown—like that of Jesus to the crown of David, so ran the argument—and an equally powerful counter-claim on the other



side through the legal fiction known as the Salic Law.

By Joan's time, however, certain complications had been ironed out and certain facts had emerged on which observers in her time and students in ours can agree. In 1380 Charles VI came to the throne and he was insane; he married a lewd Bavarian called Isabella, who hated most of his relatives and was hated by them in spectacular degree; they had three sons of whom only one survived, a feeble lad born in 1403. The great lords, seeing a chance to rule the kingdom by ruling the helpless king, had come to blows and split into two principal factions, the one headed by the king's brother Louis Duke of Orleans (Joan's father, according to an ingenious modern theory) and the other by his cousin John the Fearless Duke of Burgundy. In 1407 Duke John had Duke Louis murdered in the streets of Paris: one up for Burgundy. But the Orleanists (or Armagnacs, as they were called after the marriage of Louis' heir Charles, the poet, to the daughter of the Count of Armagnac, in 1410) retaliated by seizing the king and the seals of government. The Burgundians and their friend the Queen looked appealingly to Henry V of England, who was already looking with considerable interest at the possibilities of the situation in France. A bargain was struck and in 1415 Henry landed at Harfleur and marched across Normandy to Agincourt, where half the Armagnac aristocracy impaled themselves on his massed pikes. Thereafter he reduced town after town, systematically, pitilessly, converting the whole north into an English province. In 1418 the populace of Paris, infuriated with the incompetence of the government in the face of the enemy and always sympathetic to any opposition to the

throne, rose and slaughtered the Armagnacs with the same thoroughness that their descendants were to display in the massacres of September 1792. The fifteen-year-old Dauphin was smuggled to safety by friends, but the king and the government were handed over to the Duke of Burgundy.

It was what that high-born brigand had been working for, but his triumph left him in somewhat of a dilemma. As Regent he was expected to drive out the very invader whom as party chief he had brought in; and the prospect of what his enemies would do to him when the English were gone was dismal for even a man styled the Fearless. John hit on the solution of inviting the party that had collected round the Dauphin in the provinces to collaborate with him in the national defence, and a meeting was arranged for September 9th, 1419, at Montereau, forty miles to the south-east of Paris. Since neither side trusted the other a barricade was erected on a bridge, across which the conversations could be carried on in mutual safety. The Dauphin's friends managed nevertheless, while the Duke knelt in obeisance to his royal cousin, to split his head open with an axe. The murder of Louis of Orleans was avenged, but it was France that would pay the costs of this family quarrel in nearly twenty years of unnecessary war.

John's son Philip, a young man of no scruples but much subtlety, with the face of an anchorite and the tastes of a sultan—his nickname "the Good" carried no oppressive ethical implications—promptly turned to the English to help him with his revenge. Henry V, without bringing up any awkward questions as to what John the Fearless was doing at the bridge of Montereau, agreed to meet Philip at Troyes in Champagne. Queen Isabella

also attended, bringing her husband with her to sign whatever was put before him. On March 21st, 1420, accordingly, Charles the Mad recognized the victor of Agincourt as regent of France during his lifetime, heir to the crown after his death, and gave him his daughter Catherine in marriage. "For his enormous crimes Charles, who calls himself Dauphin . . ." was summarily disinherited, his mother quieting legitimist scruples by casting doubts on his paternity. It happened not to be true; unluckily for the Dauphin it was only too credible.

Two years and a half later Harry of Monmouth died protesting (perhaps those naked corpses were still before his eyes) "My war was approved by holy priests; in waging it I have not put my soul in peril." Two months later his father-in-law followed him, and a baby of ten months, son of one and grandson of the other, was Henry VI of England and (under the Treaty of Troyes) Henry II of France, with John Duke of Bedford exercising the regency of both countries under his brother the conqueror's will.

Bedford was, after Henry V, the ablest man, both as soldier and statesman, born of the House of Lancaster, and under him the conquest of France went remorselessly forward. There were occasional set-backs, complications with his brother Humphrey of Gloucester at home, with the Duke of Burgundy (whose sister he married to cement the alliance) on his eastern flank and the Duke of Brittany on his western; once a row between his brother and his brother-in-law resulting from a flighty matrimonial adventure of Humphrey's in Flanders slowed down operations for three years. But the Regent was able to take Parliament, his relatives, his allies and the enemy all in his

stride, and by the autumn of 1428 his troops held the upper Loire, with only the line of the river to clear in order to send the French reeling back upon the old English strongholds in the south or the Burgundian in the east. Charles VII would then be caught between the arms of a nut-cracker, as it were, and a final squeeze annihilate the Valois cause.

That was the political and strategical position at Joan's coming. It was rather a tall order the Voices had given her, as a glance at the map will show: not only to arrest an enemy who had been victoriously advancing for fourteen years, but to clear a two hundred and fifty mile path to Rheims for her Dauphin—still uncrowned after more than six years and known to the world under the contemptuous title of the "King of Bourges" from the name of his improvised capital.

But the moral position was far worse. No map, not even words, can picture the state of France and the feelings of its people in that crucial winter of 1428-9. The once rich country between the Somme and the Loire had been rendered barren as a desert—the description is that of an eyewitness, a clerk of Paris. Occasionally one came to a small oasis of a grey-walled town set in a border of living green, but for the rest one saw merely miles of abandoned farmland overrun with weed and bramble. The wolves prowled unmolested and even ventured into the outlying houses of the cities. The roads had been destroyed or neglected and no traffic passed along them, for commerce was too dangerous. Schools and monasteries lay in charred ruins, while a whole generation relapsed into brutish ignorance. One could scan the horizon vainly in any direction for a spire: the churches, the characteristic features of that landscape,

raised with such loving sacrifice through the centuries, were gone and people collected in barns for divine worship. "Had you been anywhere in that country," wrote the clerk of Paris, "you would have heard people weeping, cursing the day they were born, the lucky, the lords, the rulers, and crying aloud, 'Alas, true and gentle God, when will these pains, these miseries, this accursed war stop?'"

It is wonderful that life went on at all. When the dog-catchers had killed the dogs the poor followed them to the fields to obtain the flesh and entrails—"They ate what the pigs did not deign to eat." They died like flies of plague in consequence, and their bodies were thrown into large ditches pell-mell, with a little powder scattered over them. Even those that survived lived more like beasts than like human beings. If they managed to keep their homes from being seized for non-payment of the taxes imposed to meet the burden of the war, they were likely to be driven out of them by the roving soldiery on a shark-like hunt for food; if they were lucky they could watch their houses burning from the neighbouring woods. For vast numbers the struggle was too much: honest men became bandits, honest women prostitutes, and hordes of abandoned children roamed the countryside in a half-crazed state. "Since the name of Burgundian and Armagnac was heard in France, all the miseries that one can conceive of have been visited on the realm, till the blood of the innocent spilled on the earth cries to God for vengeance."

The dangerous thing, from the point of view of the national cause, was that people were ceasing to care: Burgundian or Armagnac, English or French, Saracen or Christian, God or Satan, it was all rapidly becoming

one. As the Valois star fell its followers sank with it into apathy. What did it matter who was the true king in the sight of God since God Himself showed His indifference by allowing things to go on thus—"not one year or two but fourteen or fifteen since this dance of death began." The English were winning: if they continued to win there might be no more war, then perhaps peace and order would come again. . . . It was not true, of course; the smaller country could not have permanently swallowed the larger, and had the English prevailed the horror would have had to be gone through again later. But a desperate people does not think in those terms, and the French people were approaching the mood when only a miracle could exalt their pride of race above that gnawing hunger for bread and for peace.

The miracle was on its way, in the custody of the country lass in boy's clothing who rode westward through Touraine within easy reach of a raiding party from one of the English posts on the Loire. On March 5th she was at Fierbois, about twelve miles from Chinon, which contained a shrine dedicated to Saint Catherine where captured soldiers who had regained their liberty deposited their armour in token of gratitude. There she spent the night, after sending forward a letter to the court announcing her arrival; on the following day at about noon she came to Chinon and took lodgings at an inn.

The Voices had promised that "as soon as she came to the king he would receive her." It did not work out so simply as that, even though she had prudently given the Voices every chance by extracting a letter of intro-

duction from Baudricourt.<sup>1</sup> She found that henceforth she would have to deal with many Baudricourts all magnified to many times the size of the original one, with no fond uncle or friendly townsfolk to smooth her way. All she could do was to wait till she was sent for.

She was not ignored, however. Officials of the court came to see her; her escort were interviewed, and soon a hot debate was going on with reference to her within the castle walls. Half the Council, led by Georges de la Tremoille, the current favourite, a colossal fat man, held that it would not only be beneath the royal dignity to receive a rustic hoyden of doubtful wit and morals, but against the public interest to encourage that considerable portion of the Dauphin's subjects afflicted with bees in their bonnets to advise in matters of high policy. The other half pointed out that Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy, two gentlemen of excellent family and unimpeachable judgment, swore by her, and that Robert de Baudricourt, whom no one had ever accused of easy credulity or impulsiveness, had found her worth recommending to the king's attention.<sup>2</sup> It was further urged that she had already given an indication of her mettle by that "miraculous" passage through a hostile country in the full season of flood and by her vision (already

<sup>1</sup> At her trial she said that the Dauphin *had* received her the same day, but the evidence the other way seems conclusive. As with many people of eager temperament Joan's memory often foreshortened episodes in the past: while the terrific compression of events in her short career undoubtedly increased that tendency. It must also be remembered that her life and more depended, at her trial, in satisfying her captious examiners that she remembered and had acted by *literal* revelations.

<sup>2</sup> There is a hint that the faction hostile to Joan withheld Baudricourt's letter from the king.

famous) of the Battle of the Herrings. The professors of theology present cited the prophecy of Mary of Avignon and one of them recounted a tale of a group of armed men who had laid an ambush for Joan on her journey but had "remained as if nailed to the spot" on her appearance.

The "ayes" had it. The "noes" were not in very good odour at the moment, for their policy of never taking a chance had scarcely justified itself by results. The aggressive party at court, headed by the king's mother-in-law, Yolanda of Aragon, Queen of Sicily and mother of the René whom Joan had tried to press into service at Nancy, was currently organizing an expedition for the relief of Orleans and footing the bills for it: that fact gave them a certain influence and predisposed them to a hope that Joan might be the means of preventing their money from going down the drain. At least it was worth trying, for nothing else seemed much use. The Dauphin wriggled, as he occasionally did, from under his corpulent favourite's thumb and Joan, after a delay of two days, was commanded into the royal presence.

There is a story that as she entered the castle gate a soldier rode up to her and shouted, "Is that the Maid? <sup>1</sup> Jarnidieu! If I had her for one night I'd not return her in that condition." To which Joan promptly retorted, "What! You blaspheme when you are so near death!" Less than an hour later the man fell into the river and was drowned. Stories such as these, gaining from repetition whatever authority they lacked in fact (the ambush yarn is another of the same kind), were what built up Joan's first prestige before they supplied the material for

<sup>1</sup> Pucelle, with the connotation of virgin.



her destruction. One notices that it is never she who tells them.

Inside the castle she was taken in charge by the Grand Master of the Household, Louis of Bourbon Count of Vendôme, and led into the audience chamber, a lofty room ninety feet long by fifty wide with grey stone walls and painted wooden vaulting. There her escort abruptly left her and for an instant she stood alone, with three hundred pairs of eyes staring at her in the light of fifty torches—three hundred noblemen, knights and prelates in their picturesque brilliance studying with curiosity or amusement the intent brown face in the frame of black hair and the young body looking absurdly small and suspiciously rounded at hip and breast in the grey jacket and hose of a man. She looked around her with a complete lack of self-consciousness, as if she had been bred all her life in such surroundings—all the witnesses gave her that. She was not in the least disconcerted by the scrutiny, was not even aware of it; she had eyes only for the person to whom she had come a long way to deliver a message . . . and he, the silly youth, was hiding in the crowd to test her. A courtier solemnly pointed out Charles Count of Clermont, the Dauphin's cousin; Joan gave the handsome young man a glance and dismissed him, at which a laugh went up at Clermont's expense. It was the sort of humour the age could appreciate. Suddenly Joan spied her sovereign where he was lurking, went directly to him, fell on her knees and said, "My gentle lord, I am sent by God to bring help to you and your realm."

The chroniclers called it a miracle and others have called it mind-reading; Joan herself said that the Voices pointed the Dauphin out to her in that crowded room.

She believed it, of course; and yet—one may wonder. Her king was to her of all things on earth by far the most important, and remained so while she lived. Long before she met him she had speculated about him, pitied him and longed to serve him; however far he fell short as a man she continued to see him only as the lieutenant of God; within minutes of a horrible death she still found voice to interrupt a preacher's tirade against him: "By my faith, messire, I dare tell you and swear that he is the most noble Christian on earth!" Is it likely that she would have spent eleven days in the company of two soldiers and one royal messenger who knew the Dauphin personally without questioning them up hill and down dale about every detail of his appearance and character? Or that she would not have tried to learn what she could from the people in Chinon, who must have seen him almost daily? And having gathered her information she would have had to be blind not to pick out, from three hundred men or three thousand, the pallid face, the heavy eyes, long overhanging nose, skinny body and twisted legs of Charles of Valois. Nor was it very remarkable, considering the mentality of the age, that when she saw those features suddenly and in such circumstances, she should have attributed the recognition to inspiration rather than to a subtle process of preparation in her own brain.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously none of the onlookers who have left their testimony seem to have been particularly impressed by that spontaneous identification, and one of them, Raoul de Gaucourt, whom she was to meet again at Orleans,

<sup>1</sup> After I had arrived at this conclusion I found that Simeon Luce had evolved a similar one in his *Jeanne d'Arc à Domrémy* for her spontaneous recognition of Baudricourt. I think that his explanation of his theory applies *a fortiori* to mine.

does not even mention it. The king himself made no comment on the failure of his childish experiment, but at once drew Joan aside into an ante-room—the chapel, she later said—and talked with her alone for a considerable while, leaving the three hundred courtiers to wonder what the strange couple would make of each other. When they reappeared it was at once noticed that “the king was joyous,” more light-hearted than for a long time past. He presented Joan to the high dignitaries present and gave orders that she should be given quarters within the castle boundaries. It was evident that she had gained a full, a surprisingly full measure of the “warm welcome from the Dauphin” that the Voices had promised. But how?

No one knows. It was at once assumed, of course, that she had given him some proof of her supernatural powers —“a sign.” Charles himself is quoted by one who knew him well as saying that she had “told him of things so secret that no mortal but himself could have known them except by divine revelation,” and Joan declared that the Voices had promised from the beginning that such a sign would be given her when she was alone with her sovereign. But neither of them gave the smallest hint of its nature, though Joan’s judges tried to drag it out of her by every means at their command, including a sight of the rack. It is the most tantalizing of all the mysteries surrounding her, for if we knew what passed in that ante-room we should be a good deal nearer to understanding how it happened that a peasant’s daughter was able to convert her private vision into the official will of a monarch.

Years later, after both of them were dead, a gentleman of Charles’ bedchamber, one de Boisy, offered a chronicler

of the late fifteenth century, Pierre de Sala, a key to the mystery, declaring that he had it from the late king himself:

“In the time of the adversity of this king Charles VII he found himself in such extremity that he no longer knew what to do, and thought only of saving his own life, for his enemies were closing in on him from all sides. In this mind the king went alone one morning into his oratory, and there prayed devoutly to our Lord, in his heart, without spoken utterance, asking humbly that if it were indeed true that he was of the blood of the noble House of France and rightful ruler of the kingdom, God would keep and defend him, or at the worst give him grace to escape without death or captivity; and that he be allowed to save himself in Spain or Scotland, the ancient brothers-in-arms and allies of the kings of France, with whom he had chosen his ultimate sanctuary.”

That secret prayer of his heart Joan repeated to the Dauphin, continues the chronicler, and thereafter he could not but believe in her.

There is a certain plausibility about the story; almost too much. It explains why the sign could not be divulged, since it would have given away the king's own doubts of his legitimacy, with disastrous effect on the public mind. It sounds convincing that Charles should have used a gentleman of his chamber (who shared his bed with him, according to custom) as a receptacle for confidential memories in his old age.

On the other hand Monsieur de Boisy may have been trying to make himself important; some of his details are wildly wrong, as when he says that Joan had herself conducted to Chinon by her parents. There are other

reasons for doubting him, the strongest of all being that Joan herself repudiated the story of a supernatural sign on the last day of her life.

Perhaps what happened was simpler, after all. Charles of Valois—lazy, deceitful and a coward—was a pretty poor specimen of a king, but he was no fool. If he shut himself up with his harlots and entrusted his affairs to dishonest and incompetent men, he at least had no illusions either about himself or them, and he treated them with a gratitude proportionate to their merits: when they could no longer supply him with the money he needed he had no scruple about deserting them to the bloody mercies of rivals who could. Though a weary fatalism, the inheritance from a mad father and a neurasthenic mother, kept him from exerting himself for long at a time, it rarely affected his intelligence. With equal apathy he allowed himself to be dragged into the murder of John the Fearless by a set of worthless favourites and to be delivered from them by the homicidal energy of the Count of Richemont: but when Richemont presented de la Tremoille—as worthless a character as any in the first lot—to his notice, he gave the fat man an appraising glance from under his heavy lids and said to the Count, “You will regret it, for he will intrigue you out of your place.” And so it happened, because he could read men.

He needed no “sign” to see in that ardent girl, possessed if one likes but gloriously self-possessed as well, a being as different from those selfish brutes in the hall outside who battered on his weakness as he was from Charlemagne and Saint Louis, those illustrious predecessors whom, with her poet’s imagination, she pictured to him kneeling on either side of the throne of God on his unworthy behalf.



CHARLES VII

*(Bibliothèque Nationale.)*



Duller men than he had detected in Joan the power of that faith whose peculiarity it is to move mountains, and wiser conceded her genius while remaining sceptical of her revelations, including Pius II, one of the great popes of the fifteenth century. Face to face with her in that chapel it was impossible for the Dauphin not to be moved by her young passionate desire to serve him, sacrifice herself for him, worship him, because he was the chosen of God. For a moment he rose to her level and saw himself the anointed and worthy successor of his fathers; and with his acute mind he realized at the same time what an inspiration like hers could do to thousands more susceptible than he. The glow soon faded, for the man was what he was, but had it been kindled by a heavenly sign outside Joan and not by the human quality in her, their common history would have followed a far different course than it did.

Joan in her innocence thought that the next step would be to fit her out with an army and send her to Orleans, but she had a good deal yet to learn about the machinery of courts, and in particular about the Dauphin's. There was as yet no army, and no certainty that the money would be found to assemble and equip one; while even the tentative approval of its nominal commander by no means guaranteed Joan a place on its staff if and when it should exist. For what assurance was there that the power that had sent her (even granted that it was not of this world) was good and not evil, God and not the Infernal One? It would be even worse for the Dauphin to recover his throne through Satan's help than not to recover it at all, since by accepting such assistance he and his line would be tainted for ever and a curse would lie on the realm. The same problem had worried Baudri-



court and led him to call in the priest; the royal council decided to submit the question to a mixed panel of experts. So Joan, chafing, fuming, weeping alternate tears of disappointment and rage, was taken in the king's train to Poitiers, where the Parliament was sitting, and lodged with Master Jean Rabateau.

There, after a delay for preliminary consultations, she was waited upon by a committee composed of secular and regular clergy, Doctors of Civil and Canon Law and Professors of Theology; the examination was not, however, strictly private, for at least one layman was present as spectator. Joan came in, sat down on the end of a bench, and asked them brusquely what they wanted. Pierre de Versailles, who apparently acted as chairman, said that they had been sent to see her on behalf of the king. Joan told them with some asperity to fire ahead: "I can tell that you have come to ask me questions. Well, I know neither A nor B."

Whatever of cordiality followed was supplied entirely by the examiners. Joan, who was raging to get into action now that she was so near the scene of it, thought the whole business a drivelling waste of time, and did not hesitate to tell the king so when she got the chance. Moreover, she did not like priests any more than did most people of the Middle Ages. Respect for the office was still strong in the fifteenth century, but sentiment toward the holders was pretty much as it is depicted in the pages of Chaucer, Villon and Rabelais. The parish clergy were to some extent tolerated, but for the prelates and the more prosperous monastic orders there was in general only hatred and contempt—they had "the finest horses, the softest beds, the prettiest women . . ." complains an anonymous poet—while the mendicant friars,

objects of such veneration in the century of Saint Francis, were put on a par with vagabonds, thieves and lepers. The sentiment was not altogether just and its causes were almost as complicated as the causes of the Reformation, but it was already in Joan's time too deep-seated for reason to affect it. She herself had been exposed to it from her early childhood, for her neighbours had been involved in a bitter and typical feud with a neighbouring abbey over a matter of payment for grazing rights; to the farmers the very cows of the monastery were objects of spite: somehow the handsome engraved coat-of-arms on their bells made them seem sleeker and fatter than other people's cattle. It is significant that the only person whom Joan greeted with friendliness among her visitors at Master Jean Rabateau's was the young soldier Gobert Thibault, whom she tapped on the shoulder with the wish that "she had a few more men of goodwill about like him" and forthwith converted into a worshipper for life. Her disdain for the examiners at Poitiers, upon whose goodwill her immediate future depended, was a foretaste of the unconcealed scorn with which she was to confront that other bench of priests who were to hold in their hands her fate in this world and (in their own opinion) the next.

Jean Lombart, one of the examiners, asked her why she had come. She reeled off "in a grand manner" the history of her revelations, omitting important details, of the visit to Baudricourt and the coming to Chinon. Master Guillaume Aimery then said, "According to what you tell us, God wishes to deliver the people of France from the distress they are in. But if God wishes to deliver the people of France He has no need of soldiers."

From the theological point of view the point seems well taken, but it was precisely the sort of quibble that invariably roused Joan to fury. "In Heaven's name," she cried, "the soldiers will fight and God will give them victory." Her faith in the virtue of unaided prayer was small—"Help yourself and God will help you," she retorted to a far tougher theological riddle at her trial. The priests at Poitiers gravely nodded approval, those at Rouen were horrified by her answer. The inconsistency was not in her; it was merely her ill-luck that theology was not quite the exact science that its hierophants claimed.

Seguin de Seguin, a professor in the subject, next took over the questioning: he was a Carmelite friar with a strong provincial accent. "In what dialect <sup>1</sup> did your Voices address you?" he asked.

"In a better than yours," snapped Joan in her Lorraine twang. At the Rehabilitation the old man repeated that answer with quiet relish, adding simply, "And indeed I speak Limousin," as one would say I speak Yorkshire or Yankee.

"Do you believe in God?" pursued Seguin.

"Yes, more than you do," came back the reply.

Perhaps Brother Seguin was a bit of a saint himself and able to condone the temptations of a sister saint, for without allowing himself to become in the least ruffled he proceeded: "God does not wish you to be believed unless there is some sign that you should be believed. How can we advise the king, on your simple assertion, to trust you and put the lives of soldiers in peril." She appeared to hesitate and he prompted, "Have you nothing further to say?"

<sup>1</sup> *Quod idioma.*

What else was there for her to say? Did they expect her to throw a rope in the air and climb up it, or turn a staff into a snake, like Moses? She had given her sign, whatever it was, to the Dauphin, and it seemed to her downright indecent ("tempting God" she called it) to be called upon to perform parlour thaumaturgy for a committee as evidence of her fitness to do the work she had been expressly commanded by Him to do. "In Heaven's name," she burst out again, "I have not come to Poitiers to make signs. Only let me go to Orleans and I will show you signs aplenty as to why I was sent."

The committee retired to consider its verdict, Joan meantime submitting to another and different kind of examination. Both Christian and pagan tradition have generally held it impossible for the deity to accomplish his major works through an imperfect female vessel: the unchaste were the devil's servants and married women came somewhere in between. The late Middle Ages in particular were full of tales of the miraculous power of virginity, such as that of the wild licorne, half horse half goat, who would allow a maid to hold him but recognize and kill any deflowered female who got in his way. It was possible for a virgin, if she were moved by the sight of a condemned criminal being led to torture and death, to save him by offering to marry him, whilst the crowd applauded and wept. The almost hysterical reverence given to female purity was perhaps a natural reaction to a licentiousness whose mere statistics make one dizzy—Jean of Burgundy, Bishop of Cambrai, had thirty-six bastards who served at his altar with their sons; Philip the Good had only sixteen, but twenty-four mistresses, for which moderation he was praised. The age realized

that it was immoral, regretted the fact, and saw no hope for itself unless by vicarious intervention. If Joan had not been a virgin she might as well have stayed at Domrémy and she knew it—she made her vow even without prompting from the Voices. Moreover, the prophecies unmistakably demanded a Maid. The dowager Queen Yolanda of Sicily and the Ladies of Trèves and Gaucourt were delegated to examine her in secret and reported that she was still intact.

Joan later stated, several times, that there existed a transcript of the proceedings at Poitiers. If so it must have been destroyed almost at once, for it was not put in evidence at her trial, where it might have done her enormous good as showing that she had already received ecclesiastical sanction for her claims. None of the witnesses at the Rehabilitation, from whom our sketchy knowledge of her examination is derived, refer to such a document, and no copy of it has ever turned up since. It seems a serious loss—though if Joan was no more forthcoming to those friendly priests at Poitiers than their testimony indicates, it may be that after all the hostile priests at Rouen got everything out of her that it was possible to get.

There is, in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, a manuscript entitled "Opinion of the Doctors required by the King with respect to the Maid sent by God," which seems to be an unofficial summary of the committee's report to the "Parlement of Poitiers" and as such was circulated through contemporary Europe. The paper tells us nothing new about Joan, but it throws a bright flash of light on the reasoning processes of an age that knew how to turn its own mysticism to practical account.

The king (begins the document) has shown praiseworthy caution for insisting on proof of (1) Joan's morals and (2) the divine origin of her mission; both have been strictly required. In regard to the first she has passed the tests triumphantly: so far as human prudence can determine, after close observation of her conduct and her words for six weeks no evil can be found in her, only piety, honesty, simplicity, chastity (by test) and humility (which it must have taken a lot of Christian charity on the part of the examiners to discern).

The proof with regard to the second point seems less satisfactory. True, "marvellous things are told of her birth and early life" but they are only hearsay. And her refusal to give a sign on the heavenly origin of her mission was distinctly awkward, since it was well known that the devil's agents were capable of assuming exteriors quite as misleading as hers. Her refusal, moreover, was a defiance of Biblical precedence: Gideon had demanded a sign and God had expressly ordered Ahab to ask for one. Luckily someone recalled the words of Gamaliel at the council of the Jews regarding the apostles, "if this work be of men it will come to naught: but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight even against God." But even if Gamaliel balanced both Gideon and Ahab and the sign could be legally dispensed with there was still the possibility that an erroneous decision might plunge the whole realm into the toils of Satan. The perplexed theologians, finding no answer in their own science, gave it up and voted for Joan "in view of the great need and danger of the kingdom." It looks very much as if theology had abdicated in favour of expediency; unfortunately for

Joan that is exactly how it looked to her priestly judges of the opposite political complexion.

One cannot help wondering whether she would have been recommended for the command of troops had the committee found her as meek and tractable as saints are conventionally supposed to be. . . .

The indulgent jury at Poitiers did not even mention her clothes, the fatal jacket and hose which were to block her last possible escape from her doom. Perhaps the examiners felt that the matter did not lie in their province, though Deuteronomy clearly states that "the woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man . . . for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God," or perhaps they agreed with Jean Gerson, the illustrious ex-chancellor of the University of Paris, who wrote the most elaborate theological defence of Joan in her lifetime, that the prohibition in the Old Testament "had ceased to be of vigour" in the New. The laity showed no such reticence and Joan sympathized with their curiosity, for when the question was raised by the crowd that saw her off in Poitiers she answered, "I know well that it seems strange to you, and not without reason; but if I am to serve the Dauphin in arms I must wear garments appropriate to that end; and also because the men may not feel carnal desire for me when I live amongst them and that I may guard my virginity by word and deed." It seems sensible enough, like so many other things she did by the Voices' instructions—though in this matter she was never quite sure whether the idea had originally been her own or theirs.

Shortly after the middle of April the court moved to Tours, the largest of the Dauphin's towns after Orleans, where Joan was lodged with a burgher named Dupuy

and the business of turning her into a soldier begun. She rode out with the king and his cousin, the young Duke of Alençon, who had given up his quail-shooting in order to hurry to Chinon on hearing of her arrival; the young aristocrat, who was to become her warmest friend, praised her horsemanship and her proficiency with a lance in terms of almost immoderate enthusiasm. She was provided with a military household, consisting of Jean d'Aulon, her senior by several years, as aide and mentor, two boys of fifteen or thereabouts, Louis de Contes and Raymond, as pages and Jean Pasquerel, an Augustine monk, as chaplain, almoner and confessor. All but Raymond were to testify at her Rehabilitation. The king had a suit of armour made for her by his own master armourer at a cost of a hundred *livres tournois*<sup>1</sup>—the same order for payment shows that similar gifts were made to Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Metz, who were to accompany her to Orleans. Joan's armour was plain—"white," as it was styled—since the handsome heraldic engravings were not worn by novices. It consisted of layers of steel plates covering the body except those parts, such as shoulders, elbows and knees, that had to be left free for motion, which were protected by flexible mail; the helmet was a light close-fitting bowl of steel without a visor. The Dauphin and the Duke of Alençon each gave her a horse—she collected quite a stable before she was through, a dozen in all of coursers and trotters. Her standard was made according to her own design by a Scottish painter, Hamish Power, resident at Tours, and became at once her fondest possession: forty

<sup>1</sup> It is quite impossible to translate the money of the time into a modern equivalent. The scale of commodity values was too different, and the coinage was subject to all sorts of fluctuation even in comparison with similar denominations in other parts of France.



times dearer to her than her sword, she said. Against a background of white satin was depicted in azure and gold God holding the world in one hand and the other raised in the act of blessing, with two angels kneeling on either side holding toward Him the fleur-de-lis; on the reverse two other angels bore the royal arms of France.

There remained only a sword to complete her equipment. The Voices had spoken of one that lay buried behind the high altar of the church of Saint Catherine at Fierbois, where she had spent the last night before coming to Chinon, and a merchant-armourer of Tours was sent to fetch it. The priests of the church looked in the spot indicated and there found it, covered with the rust of twenty years; they rubbed the blade, the rust fell off as if by magic and five crosses appeared. Without protest they handed the relic over to the messenger, adding a scabbard as their own gift to the young warriorress—there were few things that the people of the Loire country would by then have refused her. When the weapon was brought to Tours the inhabitants had two more scabbards made, one of red velvet and the other of cloth-of-gold, but Joan put aside all three in favour of a businesslike sheath of good strong leather.

A host of legends soon collected round the sword. It was supposed to possess magic properties, on the ancient theory that a wizard's virtue was in his instruments rather than in himself. The discovery of the sword is one of the few acts of literal clairvoyance that Joan claims on her own behalf and it is a somewhat unsatisfactory one. Under questioning she was unable to remember exactly where the Voices had told her to have it looked for, while a contemporary who had as good a chance of knowing where it was found as she (for she never saw the messenger)

gives a different version from any of hers. Nor did she ever say what became of it—she stated that she had it until she left her armour as a votive offering at Saint Denis, but she denied leaving the sword there and yet admitted that she did not have it afterward. One of her chroniclers says that she broke it in a rage across the shoulders of a prostitute loitering with the army and that thereafter her luck deserted her, but the story sounds more like a popular superstition than like Joan. One is almost inclined to suspect that she might have heard some tale of a sword deposited earlier by a returned captive at Fierbois (the five crosses were a common device) and that she was later unwilling to admit its loss because it was the only material gift of the Voices, but it seems safer on the whole to classify the sword of Fierbois with Arthur's Excalibur and Roland's Durandel.

From Tours the royal party moved to Blois, where the reinforcements and supplies for the relief of Orleans were nearly assembled. There Joan was first introduced as military chieftain to various of the captains who were to be her companions-in-arms: Louis de Culan, Admiral of France, who fought side by side on the firm earth with Jean de Boussac, Lord of Saint Sévère, Marshal of France; Gilles de Rais, the original Bluebeard, soon to be a Marshal also and later to be beheaded on the bridge at Nantes for trafficking with the devil; Ambrose de Loré and Florent d'Illiers, typical examples of the hard-bitten veteran to whom the war had become a game of chance with the dice loaded against them; Etienne de Vignolles, surnamed *la Hire*, the most dashing cavalry leader of his time (with the possible exception of his fellow Gascon, Poton de Saintrilles, then waiting in Orleans) as well as the most amusing wag. When *la*

Hire took off his armour he put on a mantle of red all hung over with noisy little silver bells, which was considered original even in those days of individual taste in dress, and when he went into battle he prayed, "Now, God, do for la Hire what you would like la Hire to do for you if I were God and you were la Hire." His hair-raising profanity was the awe and envy of France, until Joan took him in hand and reduced him to swearing by his staff ("par mon martin"), at least in her presence; from his fierce Gascon mouth it must have sounded rather like a Thames' bargeman saying "Oh, fudge!"

Joan divided her time during the busy week in Blois between the troops and the Dauphin, who was by now bleakly wondering what he had let himself in for. He surveyed his new army, collected by other people's self-sacrificing energy, and found it good: too good to waste on an enemy who always won. If he lost it where would he get another in the present state of his finances? Joan soothed him, scolded him, wept with annoyance one moment and spurred him with promises of great deeds the next: "Gentle Dauphin, why do you doubt me? Only let me go and you will see such things as will make you believe. . . ." But la Tremoille was simultaneously whispering caution into the indolent monarch's other ear, and if preparations had not been so far advanced he might have had the better of the tussle.

Her chief preoccupation with the army was also moral, for though she was a captain under royal commission her authority was still of a somewhat ambiguous and unmilitary kind. She ordered that no man should be allowed to come along unless he was confessed; camp-followers, who usually followed a medieval army in the ratio of one prostitute to one soldier, were to be left

behind, and looting, which was the sole attraction of the military life, as well as blasphemy, were forbidden under the severest penalties. To the historians who doubt her authority over the troops the fact that she had power to enforce those orders before she was technically a commander is a sufficient answer; while those who laugh at her methods of discipline forget that she was proposing to conduct a crusade and not the usual go-as-you-please campaign which had in the past invariably led to disaster. Her rules instilled into that medieval mob for the first time the spirit of a national army dedicated to a high and serious cause, and the proof of it is that within a fortnight they were fighting as they never knew they could fight.

On Wednesday, April 27th, the expedition was ready to take up the march to Orleans. At the head of the long column that wound its way across the wooded plain of the Sologne to the south of the Loire walked a band of priests singing *Veni Creator Spiritus*, their heavy dark robes trailing in the dust, their sacred banner held high as on a holy pilgrimage. Behind them came the soldiers, 4000 strong,<sup>1</sup> the men-at-arms and their horses in war-stained harness of steel, their retainers in padded jackets of red, green or brown and carrying bow and axe, each little unit gathered under the floating pennon of its feudal house. Bringing up the rear was the supply-train with provisions for the troops and the hungry city—ox-carts creaking under their loads of corn and wine, wave upon wave of bawling live-stock soon to be converted into beef and mutton and pork.

<sup>1</sup> It is usually impossible to estimate exactly the strength of medieval armies; one has to take an average of the most reasonable contemporary guesses.

## JOAN OF ARC

It was one of the few flawlessly happy days of Joan's brief life. The doubters and the long-winded obstructors had been left behind and a bare thirty miles up the Loire lay the enemy. A few more hours and God would begin the redemption of France through His servant as He had promised . . . nobody had yet told her that her superiors had decided after all not to risk the brave host, her "men of goodwill" tramping at her side with their faces lifted to the spring breeze, in an engagement with the terrible Godons.

## CHAPTER V

### ORLEANS

THE English army, "a great host well armed"—about 4000 men actually—had arrived before Orleans the previous 12th of October after a victorious campaign in the surrounding country. The city, an irregular rectangle about two-thirds of a mile in breadth and half a mile in depth, on the north bank of the Loire, was one of the strongest in the kingdom. Round it ran a wall varying in height from twenty to thirty feet and in thickness from six to twelve. Twenty-four castellated towers rose out of the wall at unequal intervals, their sloping bases projecting into a moat forty feet broad and twenty feet deep which was watered by the river at seasons of freshet. There were four principal gates, the *Porte Regnard* to the west, the *Porte Bannier* to the north, the *Porte de Bourgogne* to the east and a south gate giving onto a bridge some 350 yards long over the Loire. The river was rapid but navigable (in fact it was navigable until about sixty years ago) and strewn with low marshy islands.

The English commander, Thomas Montague Earl of Salisbury, selected as his first point of attack the twin-towered fortress, called the *Tourelles*, commanding the bridge-head on the left bank, whither the French had withdrawn after demolishing the adjacent suburb, *Porte-reau*, and the nearby monastery of the Augustines.

## JOAN OF ARC

Salisbury's opening gambit was to bombard the city with huge stones, some of them weighing as much as 124 pounds. The effect was moral rather than physical, for in the course of a week his missiles had accounted for exactly one victim, a woman named Belles. But in the meantime he restored and strengthened the monastery so as to use it as a base for his assault on the Tourelles, which was launched on October 21st. The fighting went on from ten in the morning until two in the afternoon, the women of Orleans rushing across the bridge to help with cauldrons of boiling oil and fat, quicklime and cinders. "Many beautiful feats of arms" were performed on both sides, until the English, after the loss of 240 men, decided to call it a day. Whereupon the victors, thrown into a panic by a rumour that the English had mined the place, evacuated it and retired into the town, breaking two arches of the bridge on the way. The English, after taking possession, threw up an earthwork or *boulevard* on the land side, dug a moat watered by the Loire between the boulevard and the fort and broke another arch of the bridge for further protection on the side of the river.

Next day Salisbury, while reconnoitring from the Tourelles, was struck by the mysterious cannon-ball, "because he had broken his promise to the Duke of Orleans not to molest his domain while he was a prisoner in England"; also "because he pillaged churches," though in that he was by no means unique. A fortnight later, on November 8th, the besiegers withdrew to the neighbouring towns of Jargeau and Meung, which they had taken the previous summer, leaving Sir William Glasdale with 500 men to hold the Tourelles. The French, instead of using the respite to rout out Glasdale's tiny force,







burned the churches in the suburbs, "the most beautiful in the realm," to prevent the enemy from using them for cover when he should return, then sat down to await that event with philosophic resignation. When the inhabitants of the suburbs had been brought into the city, 50,000 people were packed into a space intended to house half that number by the unexact standards of that time. No wonder that one of Heaven's usual ways of manifesting its displeasure was a plague.<sup>1</sup>

On December 1st, John Talbot, first baron of England, turned up with 300 men, guns and provisions. The bombardment became more regular: stones up to 164 pounds in weight were flung into the city, hitting "several houses and beautiful edifices . . . without anyone being killed or wounded, which was considered a great miracle." One fell into a house where five people were eating and not one of them was injured—"a miracle of Our Lord at the request of Monsieur Saint Aignan." The celestial patrons of the town were working overtime, though something must be allowed to the guns. The *bombarde* of the early fifteenth century was beautiful to look at, a wonderful piece of bronze casting handsomely embossed, and terrifying to listen to, but it could barely be classed as a lethal weapon. It took a score of horses to move it from place to place on its clumsy flat cart, so that it was often more expedient to leave it behind than to bring it along. A whole platoon of men was required to unlimber it, to change the powder-boxes in its breech and to stuff the cannon-balls down its muzzle; its range was short and practically unalterable once it was in position. Nevertheless the soldiers had a peculiar

<sup>1</sup> The present population of Orleans is about 35,000 and the city occupies an area well over twice that of 1429.

affection for the unwieldy monsters and each had its pet name: the French piece mounted at the small river gate, the Poterne Chesneau, was called *Montargis* in honour of the resistance put up by that town against the English the previous summer, while its antagonist directly opposite at Saint Jean-le-Blanc had been christened, with a racial humour typical of its owners, *Passe-Volant*—the name for the dummy soldiers with whom the captains padded their rolls in order to draw extra pay-allowances.

The garrison of Orleans who, with the town militia, must have outnumbered the besiegers at that stage nearly ten to one, confined their resistance chiefly to collecting the enemy's stones and flinging them back. Otherwise they left their offensive largely in the hands of John of Lorraine, a celebrated sharp-shooter with the primitive fire-arm known as the culverin—a long thin tube of bronze which still used as its principal ammunition a short arrow like a cross-bow's. John would go out to the Belle Croix, or Fair Cross, that stood at the broken end of the bridge and pick off a careless Godon or two. Then, "to mock them, he several times fell to earth pretending to be dead or wounded and had himself carried into the city, but returned abruptly to the fight and was so active that the English knew he was alive, to their great damage and displeasure." They finally captured his culverin, and he only got it back when Joan stormed the monastery of the Augustines.

On December 30th Bedford sent 2500 men under William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, to reinforce Talbot and the investment of Orleans began in earnest. The English commander crossed the river and began the construction of a substantial fort which should command the approach to the city from the west, facing the Regnard

Gate, the direction from which help from the Dauphin would normally arrive. In the centre rose a massive low tower or *bastille* of wood and stone; round it was built an earthwork or *boulevard* high enough to afford cover for the men in case of attack, and outside that was dug a deep dry moat. This was the classic form of siege-work; when the whole operation was completed there would be a complete ring of similar forts round the town. The advantage of the method was that the besiegers were nearly as safe as the defenders; the disadvantage that they were nearly as completely besieged. But medieval tactics, like medieval armour, were based on strong considerations of safety first. The success or failure of a siege usually depended on the comparative staying power of the food supply of the one side and the patience of the other; neither risked their skins unduly to accelerate the decision. The serious business of killing—and pillage and fire as well—only began when hunger had opened the gates.

The principal variation in the monotony was the *escarmouche* or *vaillantise d'armes*. From time to time the English came out from behind their ramparts and made a noisy demonstration under the walls; the French, if they felt inclined to accept the challenge, sallied forth, steel clashed on steel, a man would be wounded or a prisoner taken and the parties would separate by mutual consent. Or else the French would make a sortie, with the church-bells singing out notice to the English that they were about to be attacked, and brandish their weapons close to the English palisades; the subsequent procedure was as above. If it rained "long and hard," as it often did at that season, "they returned to the city without doing anything." A skirmish in which a rich

prisoner, capable of paying a good ransom, was taken was a victory; a day in which the casualties on both sides totalled a dozen was a day of carnage. Sometimes hostilities were suspended entirely, as on Christmas and Easter, when the English borrowed from the city "a troupe of high minstrels," with trumpets and bells, "who played their instruments a long time, making a great melody." Sometimes there were formal combats at which both armies formed a ring and cheered on their champions: la Hire's Gascons were always ready to issue this style of challenge and more often than not succeeded in unhorsing their opponents.

There was some excuse for the English lack of enterprise, apart from the conventions of contemporary warfare. The defence was immeasurably stronger than the attack: the walls of Orleans were too strong to be breached by any existing artillery or to be stormed by infantry, while all the advantage of numbers was with the city until well on in the spring. The apathy of the French was at bottom largely funk: the experience of defeat upon defeat during fourteen years, the memory of catastrophes suffered two generations previously, had planted in them the dismal conviction that the Godons were simply not to be beaten in open fight. They had been brave, too brave even, and the result had been Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, Cravant, Verneuil. What they failed to realize now was that there was no analogy between those battles and the siege they were tamely suffering, between the solid ranks of Agincourt, whose flanks and rear rested securely on hedge and stream, and Talbot's over-extended line with its flanks left dangerously in the air for lack of men to close the gap between them.

What might have been the decisive act of the siege—

and would have been if not for Joan of Arc—occurred in February. The Duke of Bedford, in Paris, sent Sir John Fastolf<sup>1</sup> with 1500 men and 300 wagon-loads of provisions to reinforce the army of the Loire. To intercept Fastolf the French collected a force of nearly 8000, “so well-dressed for war that it was a beautiful thing to see,” under the Count of Clermont and John Stuart, the Constable of Scotland. The two armies came in sight of each other at Rouvray-Saint-Denis, a village twenty miles to the north-west of Orleans. The French were criminally slow and the English commander, a veteran of the school of Henry V, had time to take up a position with an impassable hedge on his rear, dismount his cavalry and park his wagons on his flanks. The two forces stood and looked at each other: the English hurled insults across the open space, taunting the enemy to come in and fight. Whereupon the French advance-guard, in defiance of orders to wait for the main body, angrily charged in with a vigour that would have made short work of the siege of Orleans. But in the open field the old story was repeated: the English long-bowmen poured in their deadly hail of arrows from both sides, the steel-pointed English pikes, planted at an angle in the ground, caught the advancing horses breast-high, and in an instant the field was strewn with cavaliers either dead or prostrate inside a hundredweight of steel. The English counter-attack scattered the survivors over the countryside before the main army had a chance to strike a blow. This was the famous Battle of the Herrings, so called because Fastolf’s wagons were loaded with those useful fish for the army’s consumption during Lent.

The moral effect of the defeat on the French was over-

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the immortal playmate of Prince Hal.

whelming. It was taken to mean that there was no way of preventing the English from completing their circle of forts in their own good time, since the best army the Dauphin could raise, even after stripping the garrison of Orleans, was unable to beat off an English reinforcement less than a fourth its size. Though Orleans was by no means cut off as yet, it was becoming increasingly harder to bring in food; and the more the besieging force was augmented the oftener would the convoys be intercepted, while the larger the garrison the thinner the waning supplies would have to be spread. There could be but one end: and six days after the Battle of Rouvray the citizens of Orleans sent a delegation headed by Poton de Saintrailles, the Gascon cavalryman, to the Duke of Burgundy to beg him, "for the love of their lord Charles Duke of Orleans, being a prisoner in England," to take the city under his protection and compel the English to give up the siege. The appeal was tantamount to a surrender, for Philip of Burgundy was the ally of England and the hereditary enemy of Charles of Orleans; but at least he was a Frenchman.

Had the transaction been carried through the history of Europe would have been inconceivably altered. The Valois dynasty would have been extinguished and England have become the minor partner in a dual kingdom. She would soon have had to enter into a struggle with Burgundy for the domination of France and hence by necessity of Europe; she would have had to orient herself in the sixteenth century toward the papacy and the continent instead of the Reformation and the New World—the possibilities stagger the imagination. It was a near thing, as it turned out. Philip the Good was quite ready to take over his enemy's property in trust, and the Dauphin

was actively preparing to flee abroad, leaving his friends to make what composition they could with the victors. But the final word was Bedford's, and he tartly informed his brother-in-law that he had no intention "of beating the bush in order that the other might make off with the birds." Burgundy in a huff withdrew his 1500 men from the Loire and the delegation under Poton de Saintrailles returned to Orleans on April 17th empty-handed.

Extraordinary changes had taken place during those two months. The ring of forts had been extended one by one both north and south of the river until the encirclement was three-fourths complete. Next to Saint Laurent rose the squat tower of the Croix-Boissée, then came in order Douze-Pierres, Pressoir-Ars and Saint Pouair et Saint Ladre, the last three nicknamed London, Rouen and Paris respectively, much in the manner of 1914-18. The five together, connected by a series of trenches, lay directly astride the avenue into the Dauphin's country. On the left bank opposite Saint Laurent was the boulevard of Champ Saint Privé, and on the little island of Charlemagne between them was another fortified post, blocking the river on that side. To the east of the city on the right bank the church of Saint Loup had been garrisoned and on the left bank a small post, Saint Jean le Blanc, had been thrown out from the Tourelles to help keep an eye on traffic from upstream. As Poton and his companions slipped warily through the one open place to the north-east of the city they must have expected to find the terrified inhabitants with the reek of blood and smoke already in their nostrils. Instead they were swallowed up in a tumult of mad rejoicing and informed that certain deliverance was on its way.



It is impossible for any association of ideas within the range of twentieth-century minds to convey what Joan's coming meant to the people of Orleans. One would have to reverse the stream of reason, unlearn three centuries and more of stored-up knowledge, undo the experiments of Harvey and Newton, Darwin and Einstein, until one believed again, simply and literally, in the invulnerability of Achilles' armour and the purposeful destruction of Sennacherib's host by an angel of the Lord. It was a little as if we, in the most desperate moment of a hostile invasion, should hear a rumour of some new invention, a tank or an aeroplane, that might yet save us—as if the government, to keep up our morale a bit longer, gave credit to the rumour—and we then learned that the invention had been enthusiastically approved by a board of experts from the War Office . . . but we should probably restrain our enthusiasm until we saw how the thing worked. There was no such qualification in the mind of Orleans: whether we call it propaganda, hysteria or faith (probably all three had their part), when the watchers in the towers signalled the passing of the convoy from Blois on the horizon beyond the Loire the town knew that it was already as good as saved.

The heroine herself was not so happy by that time. She had left Blois believing that she was to march directly on the enemy; she now learned that she had been deceived, that in a characteristic fit of caution the Council had decided not to force a way through the English line at Saint Laurent but to make a wide detour to the south and east, cross the river upstream and smuggle in the provisions by the back door. The army itself, which she knew to be keyed up to battle pitch, was then to be sent back the way it came. The deception was only too easy,

for how was she to know the position of Orleans with reference either to Blois or the English?

She was, therefore, in a furious temper when the commander of the garrison came to meet her, at a spot five miles past her destination and on the opposite side of the river from it. "Are you the Bastard of Orleans?" she demanded without ceremony.

The young man admitted that he was.

"Was it by your advice," she went on angrily, "that I came by this bank of the river instead of the other, where Talbot and the English are?"

John, Bastard of Orleans (there was no odium about the title in those days; in fact quite the contrary when it was coupled with a great name), was not only a soldier but a gentleman. He might have retorted that he had been directing strategy before she was old enough to supervise her father's cows, or that the fate of Orleans was more his affair than hers, since he was head of the house during his half-brother's captivity. But he merely replied with bland courtesy, "I and those wiser than I reached that decision thinking that it would be better and safer so."

The soft answer did not deflect Joan's wrath. "In Heaven's name," she cried, "the Lord's counsel is wiser and safer than yours. You thought to deceive me but you have only deceived yourselves. For I bring you better help than has ever come to any soldier or city, the help of the King of Heaven . . .

The Bastard was unconvinced but sensible enough not to say so. On the face of it he should have been right and Joan wrong, for he knew the situation and she did not. Nevertheless he himself was to lead those same troops in less than a week from Blois to Orleans by the

very route indicated by Joan, and the English would not raise a finger to stop him. The fact alone proves nothing, of course: she had no means of knowing what the English would do since she was in total ignorance of their strength; though it must be admitted that the French generals knew very little more, since they troubled with such tedious details as little as did Joan's Voices. The real difference between the Bastard's point of view and hers was less one of knowledge than of something else: a cautious adherence to convention bred of the spirit of the time on one side, and an instinct born of God knows what on the other, that the fundamental secret of victory in war lies in seeking out the enemy wherever he is and destroying him.

The plan adopted, against which Joan kicked so vigorously, was to bring a fleet of sailing barges up the river from Orleans, put the live-stock and provisions aboard, send the boats down on the current and unload them at the Poterne Chesneau. The only English garrison on that side was at Saint Loup, and to keep them diverted a strong party was sent out from Orleans to make a demonstration before it. Unfortunately the wind had been blowing from the east for several days and the barges had been unable to put out. While Joan and the Bastard were talking the wind suddenly veered round to the west; the boats ran up briskly, took on their cargoes and were back again before nightfall. The demonstrating party then went home in triumph with a captured English standard. "From that moment," declared the Bastard at the Rehabilitation (he was Count of Dunois by then), "I believed in Joan as I had not before."

The next difficulty arose when it was revealed to her that the army was to return to Blois, since there was no

bridge nearer not in English hands and so large a force could not be safely transported by water. Joan at first flatly refused to stay behind, vowing that she would not quit her men, "all well-confessed and of goodwill." She had come with them to fight: if they were not to be given the chance at once, she wanted to be where she could keep her eye on them. The Bastard argued with all his considerable eloquence, pointing out that the people of Orleans were waiting for her with feverish eagerness and that there was no knowing what they would do if she disappointed them. In actual fact they probably would have made a serious rumpus, for they were on anything but good terms with the soldiers, believing with some justice that the latter were content to see the siege drag out so long as the burghers kept them in food and women. Joan, now sceptical of anything the handsome aristocrat told her, refused to budge. The Bastard then collected the other captains, those who had accompanied her from Blois as well as those who had come with him from Orleans, and begged them to add their voices to his. Finally Joan yielded, after the various commanders had given their solemn promises to lead their men back immediately. As a precaution, however, she sent her chaplain Pasquerel and her aide d'Aulon along to keep them—and the Dauphin—to their word.

Her suspicions turned out to be only too well founded: the Bastard himself had shortly to go to Blois to cajole the king into letting the army return, and by the time he extorted the royal consent the force had shrunk to half its number, which was a way medieval armies had. At a critical moment of the siege Boussac de Saint-Sévère, Marshal of France, with his company took leave of

absence to go and claim some lands left by his brother-in-law, killed at the Battle of the Herrings.

The boats had not yet been completely loaded and it was still light when Joan crossed the river with the Bastard and his 200 lances.<sup>1</sup> There were only five miles left to go, but it was decided to wait and postpone Joan's entry until after dark so as to discourage the tumultuous reception that the town was preparing for her.

The ruse was unsuccessful. Every able-bodied man, woman and child except those on watch were packed in the vicinity of the Burgundy gate as she rode in on a white horse at eight o'clock that evening, with the Bastard on her left "very richly armed and mounted." All the notables of the town and of the army were there to greet her, and behind them the populace "carrying great numbers of torches and making such joy as if God Himself had descended amongst them . . . they felt themselves entirely comforted as if the siege had already been lifted, for the divine virtue which they had been told was in the simple Maid." They pushed forward to touch her garments, even her horse, with their rosaries for luck, a practice which Joan vainly tried to discourage—"Touch them yourselves," she called out good-humouredly in a similar situation at Poitiers, "it's quite as good as my doing it." It was the idolatry of her friends as much as anything that caused her to be burned—and then they flocked in numbers to her Rehabilitation to testify to her unfailing modesty, simplicity and humility!

The crowd pressed so close that a torch set fire to her

<sup>1</sup> A "lance" consisted of one mounted man-at-arms and his retinue, who varied in number from three to as many as eight or more.

standard, which a page was carrying behind her. At the shout of dismay that went up she turned her head, clapped her spurs into her horse, wheeled him round and promptly slapped out the flame "as if she had long followed the wars, which the soldiers took for a great marvel." Those simple miracles had their uses. The throng accompanied her the whole length of the city to the house of Jaques Boucher, treasurer to the Duke of Orleans, which lay close to the Regnard Gate; it still stands, largely rebuilt and much altered. There she was lodged with her two younger brothers, who had recently joined her, Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy.<sup>1</sup>

This was the evening of April 29th. The following day, Saturday the 30th, la Hire, Florent d'Illiers and several other knights led out a mixed party of the regular soldiery and the town militia to drive in an outpost which the English had thrust forward from the Paris redoubt to within two bowshots of the Bannier Gate. The column marched out as usual with pennons flying, bells ringing, crowds cheering. The outpost prudently retired and the word went back to bring faggots, straw and other inflammables to fire the redoubt itself, "but nothing happened because the English sent up great cries and were all in readiness" when the attackers reached the moat. So the French returned worn out after "their long and hard skirmish during which the cannons fired marvellously and several were killed and wounded on both sides." This was the last time that the English at Orleans were to get off by looking ready and shouting "hurrah." In the next seven days they would have to do more fighting than in the seven months past.

<sup>1</sup> These details are taken from the *Journal of the Siege*, compiled some years later at the order of the municipality.

## JOAN OF ARC

Joan took no part in the action; probably she was not even told about it beforehand. But it seems clear, from the evidence of the Bastard and of her page Louis de Contes, that after it began she dashed off to find the Bastard and insisted that the attack once started should be driven home. He explained that it was not intended to undertake any serious operation until the troops returned from Blois, and since it was already too late in the day she left the matter at that. But from the first moment that she laid eyes on the military situation she was outraged by those futile displays in which her contemporaries took such delight. She saw them for what they were, a waste of men without purpose, a frittering away of morale in repulses ceremoniously disguised as "beautiful feats of arms." Her peasant common sense, unblinded by too long study of a text-book of war based on obsolete rules of chivalry, informed her that the end and aim of fighting was victory and all the rest pretentious nonsense; so she proceeded, as soon as she got the chance, to tear up the text-book.

Yet it was not chivalry itself, but its desiccated customs, to which she objected. Its spirit she loved, and it was in its spirit that she addressed the famous letter to the English commanders warning them that she was about to attack:

✠ JHESUS MARIA ✠

"King of England, and you, Duke of Bedford, who call yourself Regent of the realm of France, you William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, John Talbot, and you, Thomas, Lord Scales, who call yourselves lieutenants of the said Bedford—

"Submit to the King of Heaven; surrender to the Maid who has been sent by God the keys of all the

good cities which you have taken and violated in France. She has come by God's order to restore the royal blood. She is ready to make peace, if you will submit, provided that you quit France and pay for what you have taken. And you, archers, gentlemen, soldiers of whatever rank before Orleans, depart in God's name into your own country; and if you will not, expect soon to see the Maid, who will inflict great damage upon you.

"King of England, if you fail to do as I ask, I am a military chieftain and, in whatever place in France I come upon your men, I shall cause them to depart, whether by their will or no; and if they refuse to obey I shall have them killed. I am sent here by God the King of Heaven to meet them body to body and drive them out of the realm of France. But if they will yield I will grant them mercy. And doubt it not, for you shall not have the realm of France from God, the King of Heaven, son of Saint Mary, but it will be held by Charles, the true heir, for God wishes it and has so revealed to him by the Maid, and he will enter Paris with a noble company.

"If you will not believe the tidings sent you from God and the Maid, we shall strike you down in whatever place we find you, and make you such a great 'hahay' <sup>1</sup> as has not been seen in France for a thousand years unless you submit to us. And know well that God will lend such strength to the Maid that you will be unable to withstand her and her good soldiers.

"You, Duke of Bedford, the Maid begs and requires of you that you do not seek your own destruction. If you consent you will be able to come in her company, thence where the French will perform the noblest deed

<sup>1</sup> A battle cry that carries its own onomatopœic implication.



## JOAN OF ARC

ever done for Christianity. Answer, if you will make peace in the city of Orleans; and if you refuse, you will remember it to your sorrow.”

It sounds naïve, involved and repetitious, but no more so than the quasi-medieval documents upon which a modern lawyer's clerk works until he reaches a satisfactory standard of formality. Moreover, as it stands here it is not only a translation out of another language but out of the idiom of another age. Yet the sentiments are Joan's, if the words are not. What she says in effect is that unless the English will go back to their own country where they belong she will seek them out and compel them by force; that the Lord has promised her victory and will provide the necessary means; but that if they will go peaceably she invites them (in the last paragraph) to join with France in a great final crusade to regain the Holy Sepulchre—the slowly-expiring dream of the Middle Ages.

The letter is dated Tuesday of Holy Week, which fell on March 22nd. The chronicles say that it was composed at Blois, but that is impossible, for she was at Poitiers at the time, and in fact one of her examiners there took down the first draft at her dictation. What probably happened is that it was worked over at Blois and carried to the English headquarters at Saint Laurent immediately before or after her arrival at Orleans. The English answer was to seize Guyenne, one of the two heralds who bore it, and send back the other, Ambleville, with the message that they intended to burn his colleague and would do the same to Joan if they ever laid hands on her. Both threats were rather crude: one did not burn either heralds or prisoners of war. The English, quite aware of the fact, sent to the University of Paris, the fountain-head

of canonical law, to find out whether the customary sanctity applied to a messenger in the employ of a witch and false prophetess. Luckily for Guyenne his fate did not depend on the answer. When Joan's turn came it did.

Joan, furious at the treatment of her herald, promptly sent Ambleville back, on the evening of the 30th, with a repetition of her summons "addressed to Talbot in her simple mother tongue" and a peremptory demand that he return Guyenne forthwith. Ambleville was naturally reluctant to go, but Joan assured him that he would come to no harm and would bring back his companion safe and sound. The *Journal of the Siege* says that he did, after a threat by the Bastard to kill the English prisoners in his hands; a chronicler who was a herald himself says that he did not, and that Guyenne was only released, after having been led forth to the stake, by the raising of the siege.<sup>1</sup> This second, in view of what follows, is the more likely.

To this second summons the English commanders returned the indirect but nevertheless unambiguous answer that the so-called Maid was a whore and had better go back to minding her cows. The association of Joan with those humble beasts was somewhat exaggerated by her enemies, because it put her lower on the social scale than the more usual employment of her childhood, which was helping her mother. The story made her so angry that at her trial she denied ever having had anything to do with cows, though there is no doubt that

<sup>1</sup> The witnesses and chronicles are so wildly contradictory about the heralds and Joan's various summons to the English that no straightforward version of what happened is possible and no two of Joan's biographers agree.

on occasions she had to take her turn looking after her father's.

By the next day, Sunday, May 1st, it was apparent that the army of relief had been detained at Blois, as Joan had feared it would be, and the Bastard left with an escort to see what the trouble was. He took the road by the forest to the north of the city, making a circle around the main English camp to the west, and Joan accompanied him with la Hire and a small force of cavalry until he was safely on his way. The fact that the English did nothing to intercept the Bastard going forth or Joan on her coming back was laid to her credit as another miracle; so in a sense it was, for the English, despite their insults, were already thoroughly perplexed and frightened, not knowing what to make of her, and never once stirred out of their forts after her arrival. Between the belief of the French that she had been sent by God and the uncertainty of the English as to whether she might not have been sent by the devil (it must be remembered that their own experts had not yet had a chance at her), her work was half-accomplished before she struck a blow. But only half—the next few days were to show that neither the faith nor the fear were so profound as they looked on the surface.

On the Monday she went out on horseback to make a long reconnaissance of the English positions north of the river, "the people running after her in a great throng, taking great pleasure in seeing and being round her," so much did they admire her manner and the way she sat her horse. The English merely stared at the strange procession and again did nothing, thus missing a chance to do the best day's work of the Hundred Years' War for their cause. Naturally the populace thought

they were afraid of Joan, their spirits rose still further and they chalked up another miracle for her. On her return to the city she attended vespers at the Cathedral.

On the following day the atmosphere of carnival began to evaporate somewhat. The Bastard had been expected back the previous evening and as yet nothing had been heard of him. Unluckily there is no record of what went on at Blois that Monday, when the army should have been on the march, but it is very likely that the Bastard was having to make a fight for it against the influence of the favourite, who had no love for the family of Orleans, or indeed for any of the royal blood, since he kept his influence over the Dauphin largely by keeping the Dauphin's relatives out of his way. In the end the Bastard, after a twenty-four hours' delay, won another victory for his house, and late on Tuesday evening his arrival was signalled from the watch-towers. Joan and various of the captains rode out to meet him, and early the next morning the column of 2000, headed as before by Pasquerel and the priests, entered the city after a flank march past the English who took no notice of them. With the arrival of the reinforcements the two armies were about equal—5000 regulars or mercenaries and 5000 militia in the town, 8000 or 9000 outside counting the Picards, Normans and other French in the English ranks.

That day after dinner (the principal meal of the day, eaten at noon) the Bastard came to see Joan and told her that Fastolf, the victor of the Herrings, was on his way with a substantial force and had already arrived at Joinville, twenty miles to the north. Joan, instead of being depressed by the news, was delighted: it offered

the prospect at last of something definite to do. "Bastard, Bastard," she exclaimed gaily, "I command you to tell me of his arrival as soon as you have word of it; for if he gets in without my knowledge I promise you that I will have your head cut off."

The most famous soldier in France, and the active chief of its greatest house, told her gravely not to worry, that she would be kept informed. He may have been insincere, but it did not matter, since his news was inaccurate, as news usually was in that time. Fastolf did not arrive in Joinville till six weeks later, and when he did she no longer depended on the Bastard for her information.

Later that afternoon Joan, who had not been to bed since the morning of the previous day, went to her room to snatch some rest. Her hostess lay down with her, according to the usage of the time—one of the clinching proofs submitted by Joan's friends of her invincible chastity was that she rarely slept without a woman, preferably a pure young virgin, at her side. d'Aulon, just returned from his long march, flung himself down on a cot in the same room. Louis de Contes, the page, was also in the room or close by. Barely had they fallen asleep when Joan awoke with a start and exclaimed, "My Voices have told me to go against the English, but I do not know whether I am to go against their *bastilles* or against Fastolf, who is to reinforce them."

So saying she leaped from her bed and ordered her armour to be brought and buckled on her, while the page hurried off to get her horse. Meantime a great uproar was going on in the streets outside, people running and shouting that the enemy were inflicting serious but unspecified damage on the French. Joan, without

waiting for d'Aulon to put on his own armour, raced down the stairs, threw herself into the saddle, then reined in while Louis de Contes dashed up again for her standard, which he passed to her through the window. Grasping it she galloped off like the wind, "her horse striking sparks from the pavement" (another miracle according to several accounts), in the direction of the Burgundy gate, "where the greatest noise was." d'Aulon and the page followed after as hard as they could.

Only when she arrived at the gate did she learn what the trouble was. Fifteen hundred of the garrison had gone out a short time before to perform the usual *vaillantise d'armes* against the isolated post of Saint Loup, which was defended by less than 400 men. The impetuosity of their attack had actually carried them across the moat and into the outworks: then they discovered that they had forgotten to bring along scaling ladders, inflammables and the other siege implements they needed if they were to go further. For an instant they remained, a huddled and uncertain mass exposed to a devastating English fire from within the church, then broke and ran. When Joan came up she found them pouring through the gate helter-skelter, carrying their dead and wounded with them.

It was her first real sight of war. For an instant her woman's heart turned round within her. She caught sight of one of the townsfolk, bleeding and unconscious, in the arms of his comrades, and cried out, "Who is that?"

"A Frenchman," they told her.

She turned away and saw d'Aulon, who had caught up with her. "I have never caught sight of the blood of a Frenchman that the hair did not rise on my head," she

said with a shudder. The somewhat rhetorical form of the remark is his: the feeling that lay behind it she showed when she presently knelt to take the head of a dying enemy into her lap.

Almost instantly she pulled herself together. Commands rang out crisply: the fugitives were halted and whipped into order behind her banner, fresh troops and siege material brought up. In a short time the column was again on the move toward the weary and astonished English.

There was no hit-or-miss about this attack. The out-works were stormed as before and the defenders driven in. The high double ladders were thrown across the moat, the bowmen climbed to their positions on the narrow platforms thus raised in the air and poured their arrows into every exposed spot from which the enemy might have a field of fire. The infantry, sheltered against missiles from above under their huge shields of wood and metal, dashed forward, placed their scaling ladders against the walls and scrambled up with their deadly battle-axes. Below working parties steadily pounded away to make a breach in door or wall and piled faggots with which to set the structure alight. Through the din could be heard the high girlish voice calling out words of encouragement and command.

Meantime Talbot, hearing the noise, led out a strong relief on the run from "Paris," the nearest of the English forts. But that manœuvre had been foreseen: from the belfry of the watch-tower by the Bannier Gate the bells rang out in alarm and the Marshal Boussac de Saint Sévère, who had been left in the town for that purpose, deployed 600 men across the Englishman's path. Talbot, not daring to join in a general action for fear of an

assault on his rear and even on his main camp from the town, was compelled to fall back and leave Saint Loup to its fate. This was the first combined operation of any sort by the defence during the whole course of the siege.

With Talbot's retreat the garrison of Saint Loup, still fighting magnificently against overwhelming numbers, knew that they were doomed. They offered a capitulation on terms, but the French, with smoke already pouring from the edifice and its walls crumbling on all sides, merely jeered at the offer. There was no holding them now: they were tasting blood for the first time and enjoying it. With a final rush they burst in at the same instant as the remnant of the English resolved on a desperate attempt to fight their way out. In an instant the defenders had all been despatched except forty who, with great presence of mind, had put on priests' vestments and tried to look as if they were glad to be delivered from captivity. The French quickly penetrated the deception and wanted to finish them off too, but Joan, between pity and laughter, managed to save them and send them to Orleans by river in order to protect them from the mob. The church was then sacked and burnt to the ground.

The immediate practical effect of the taking of Saint Loup was to free the north bank of the Loire upstream; its moral effect was of far greater importance, since it was the first French victory, the first break in the English encirclement, since the beginning of the siege. The French at last knew that their enemies were not invulnerable, though perhaps they exaggerated when they said that "whereas hitherto the English could put to flight with 200 of theirs 800 of ours, we thereafter needed



only four or five hundred to contend with the whole English force.”<sup>1</sup>

Saint Loup was not only Joan's baptism of fire but her début as a commander. It can hardly be disputed that it was an auspicious one. Her part was largely moral, it is true—there was no room in that riotous assault for tactics even had she possessed a knowledge of them. But what she did was what no living French soldier had yet proved himself able to do, and that was to convert a defeat into a victory. By all the military canons of the time it was perfectly proper for the skirmishers to begin an attack which they had no means of carrying to a conclusion, and nobody thought to complain if they returned repulsed and bruised. It was Joan, the novice, who realized that those men *had* to go back in order to prove to themselves that they were more than a match for that handful of the enemy, even behind his walls. Nothing so rots the morale of an army as indecisive and wasteful fighting, not even defeat: it is a principle of warfare so fundamental that one is astonished at how completely it had been forgotten until a seventeen year old girl rediscovered it out of her own brain. For if the Voices had sent her to the scene of action at the critical moment, they had not told her what to do when she got there.

Their way of sending her is like a beam of light in great darkness: for once we actually catch the Voices at work. She was awakened out of an exhausted sleep by a clamour in the streets . . . her first thought must have been that a night-attack had been started and the shouts from the street brought quick confirmation. In what quarter the

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from the Bastard, but the same sentiment is expressed by various others with slight variations in the figures.

attack lay she had not the faintest idea, nor did the Voices enlighten her—but into her sleep-benumbed wits flashed the name of Fastolf, of whom she had been hearing from the Bastard a very short while before. She hastened downstairs, discovered whence the greatest noise was coming, and naturally galloped off in that direction. The facts are related by d'Aulon and de Contes, both eyewitnesses, and for once there is no serious dispute about them. Both, of course, reverently believed, after the providential result of Joan's sudden awakening, that they had been privileged to assist in person at a visit of their mistress's heavenly Counsel.

Joan resumed her interrupted nap. Next day, Thursday, May 5th, was the Feast of the Ascension. Early in the morning she sought out the other chieftains and urged an immediate attack on the main English camp to the west of the city. They turned her down, on the ground that it was unseemly and unlucky to fight on a holy day. She persisted, arguing with some justification after the events of the previous day that "the hour has struck." But she was unsuccessful and took herself of "ill content with the chiefs and captains of war."

Those gentlemen may have been sincere in their objection—the devout Maid was somewhat unique in her willingness to fight on holidays and had to answer for her originality to her horror-stricken judges—but religion was not the only reason why they disregarded her appeal. Unlike the populace, those veterans of many campaigns had as yet no great opinion of Joan as a soldier; many of them never did have. They saw her still rather as a useful mascot, whose advice was worthless and whose discretion was not to be trusted, so when they convoked a council of war later in the

day to determine their future plan of campaign they neglected to invite her to it.

The plan they adopted after some discussion was to cross the river the following morning and attack the English works at the bridge-head, masking the operation by a feint against Saint Laurent in order to prevent Talbot from sending men over to Glasdale's assistance and in the hope that Glasdale might strip himself to come to Talbot's. The scheme was in every respect inferior to Joan's. Hers if successful would have wiped out the main English force and raised the siege immediately; theirs was directed against a secondary point whose loss would have annoyed but not seriously crippled the enemy. In the event of defeat at Saint Laurent a way of retreat lay open into the city; a repulse at the Tourelles meant serious loss while the troops were re-embarking, and the abandonment of the guns and other material. Moreover, the girl's plan had the merit of extreme simplicity, while the other divided the available forces and required an elaborate water transport for its execution.

When the council had arrived at its decision Ambrose de Loré was sent to fetch Joan, who could not be left out of the picture altogether because of the feeling of the townsfolk towards her. When she arrived Guillaume Cousinot, Chancellor of the Duchy of Orleans, told her of the projected assault on Saint Laurent but carefully avoided mentioning the principal operation across the river.

The about-face was too obvious. Joan, not taken in for an instant, scanned the ring of weather-beaten faces and said point-blank, "Now tell me what you've really decided. I can keep a bigger secret than that." More

annoyed than angry she paced up and down the room in long strides, refusing to sit down.

The disconcerted chieftains unanimously turned to the Bastard to explain away their spokesman's lie. Equal to every emergency, the Bastard said soothingly, "Don't be angry, Joan; we couldn't tell you everything at once. What the chancellor has told you is true . . ." and he went on to unfold the rest of the plan as if the attack on the Tourelles were an addendum instead of the main operation.

Joan, rather than squabble fruitlessly over details, accepted the modification of her original design and the meeting adjourned. Then, with true medieval inconsequence, the larger plan was scrapped overnight for no ascertainable cause and everything concentrated on the attack south of the river.

The same evening Joan issued her third and last summons. Going out to the broken end of the bridge she had an arrow fired into the Tourelles bearing a letter which read:

"You, Englishmen, who have no right in the realm of France, the King of Heaven commands you by me, Joan the Maid, to leave your *bastilles* and return to your own country. If not I shall make you such a *hahay* that it will live in perpetual memory. (It cannot be said that she exaggerated.) I write you for the third and last time and I shall not write again."

By way of postscript she added "I should have sent my letter more politely but you keep my heralds. You kept my herald Guyenne. If you will send him back I will send back a few of your men taken at Saint Loup, for they are not all dead." As the archer sent the missive

flying across the river she had him cry "Read it—News!"

The English took it and read it and shouted back "News from the Armagnac whore," coupled with various unflattering allusions to her ancestry and social origins. The French with her they branded "maqueraulx"—the ancient Gallic epithet for men who live off women; in Anglo-Saxon, pimps. Joan burst into tears, less at the insults—though strong men easily wept for less—than at the English obstinacy in refusing a warning so plainly intended for their own good. She prayed awhile and allowed herself to be consoled with the thought that the inevitable battle was now the will of Heaven.

Before retiring she told Pasquerel to call her early since she wanted to confess to him before going into action. She need not have hurried: it took the whole morning to get the boats ready and to load the men and materials on them. It was already afternoon by the time the expedition, 4000 strong under the command of the Marshal Boussac, Gilles de Rais, Florent d'Illiers, la Hire, Joan and others were rowed over to the Ile-aux-Toiles (otherwise the Island-before-Saint Aignan); from there they crossed by a pontoon bridge to the mainland. The post of Saint Jean le Blanc lay in their way, but it was too weak to oppose them and Glasdale withdrew its garrison to the Tourelles.

The initial point of attack was the monastery of the Augustines, which guarded the approach to the bridge-head itself. A company of townsfolk, disembarked first, ran across the 500 yards of demolished suburb in order to be on the spot before the regulars. As they arrived before the walls someone shouted that the English were coming up on their left from Champ Saint Privé. The

militia, at once justifying the professionals' distrust, broke into panic and made helter-skelter for the boats, the garrison of the Augustines following with loud hurrahs on their heels. The waterside at once became a struggling mass of frantic fugitives trying to get on to the pontoon and advancing columns trying to get off. Had Glasdale come up there is no telling what might have happened.

Through the welter of bawling men, wagons and horses two determined figures thrust their way—Joan and la Hire. At the point of the lance they beat off the foremost English, who stumbled back amongst their comrades; then, as support came up, the French pair began moving relentlessly forward until the English turned tail and dashed for the shelter of their ramparts. Joan planted her standard firmly at the edge of the moat, the French flocked up from the moored boats, and the attack was joined with vigour.

It could have but one end unless the offence grew discouraged, for they outnumbered their adversaries fully ten to one. The English could expect no help: Glasdale dared not expose the Tourelles by coming out to strengthen them, and the commanders across the river were under the impression that the affair south of the river was a mere demonstration intended to draw them out so that the Bastard, who was still in Orleans with at least half the available French force, might take advantage of their absence to storm their main works. Actually, as we know, nothing was now further from the Bastard's mind.

But another ally was coming to the assistance of the stalwart three hundred inside the Augustines. It was already late when the attack started; if they could hold on till darkness fell they had every chance of being reinforced during the night, even of discouraging the

## JOAN OF ARC

French from renewing the assault in the morning. So they fought on against time, with anxious glances at the sun sinking—too slowly for them, much too quickly for the French—into the Loire. Joan could make her men stick to it as they never had before, but she lacked Joshua's power, or her contemporary Saint Colette's, over the heavenly bodies.

Then, as so often happens in war, a small incident turned the scale. Joan had left d'Aulon behind with a strong party that included various important captains to guard the boats and protect the line of retreat against a sudden raid from the Tourelles. The young man remained at his post until the excitement became too much for him and then slipped forward to the scene of the fighting. There he came upon two men, one a Spaniard called Alphonso de Partada, the other anonymous, disputing with acrimony as to which of the two was the braver; finally, to settle the matter, they joined hands and rushed together to an opening in the parapet where the action was hottest.

A gigantic Englishman was holding the spot alone, laying about him with mighty sweeps of his axe and refusing to be dislodged. The two disputants hurled themselves on him impetuously, but with no better luck than others who now lay at the bottom of the moat. d'Aulon, seeing John of Lorraine nearby, pointed out the English giant and suggested that the marksman have a shot at him. John levelled his culverin (presumably a borrowed one, since the enemy had his), let fly one steel-pointed bolt and the big man toppled off the palisade. Alphonso and his partner promptly rushed in, others followed in a torrent, and the English, or what was left of them, seeing that further resistance was hopeless, fled

across to the Tourelles. Nearly two hundred of the defenders were killed and John of Lorraine was reunited to his culverin after months of separation.

Joan set a working party to raze the captured fort immediately, a wise precaution to prevent the disorder and indiscipline of sack in sight of the enemy. The troops were left encamped on the field, food and drink being brought over to them from Orleans, while the captains, including Joan, returned to the city for the night. She had a wounded foot to nurse, the result of stepping on one of the ugly spiked contrivances called calthrops, with which combatants liberally strewed one another's paths; and if some accounts be true she had still to keep an eye on various of the captains.

The usual procedure after a good day's fighting was for everybody to go home to rest and celebrate. According to Pasquerel, an eyewitness although not a uniformly reliable one, that is what a council-of-war summoned that night proposed. The chieftains had had a thoughtful look at the Tourelles, found them exceedingly high and strong—"not to be taken in a month," according to a contemporary military verdict—and suggested that it would be wiser to postpone further operations until the Dauphin sent additional reinforcements. When the proposition was put before Joan she flatly refused to listen, saying, "You have your counsel and I have mine; my Master's will achieve and endure, while yours will perish." And she had her way because it would have been dangerous, in the existing temper of the townspeople, to draw back with a real victory at last in sight.

It sounds improbable that responsible leaders should even have thought of retreating at that stage, but whoever declines to swallow the improbable in the Middle Ages



will often find himself chewing on absolute nothingness. It is scarcely more credible that the English commanders did not stir all day to succour their men south of the river. If it was too dangerous to send help across, they could certainly have launched an assault on the Regnard Gate which, even if it had not been driven home, would have distracted the French on the left bank and perhaps brought the militia scurrying back to protect their city. The night offered a first-class opportunity for sending out a force to fall on the troops left round the Augustines: the only conceivable reason why it was not done was that night manœuvres were unfashionable, though Joan rediscovered their possibilities for herself a year later. The only activity of the English during the night was to withdraw the garrison of Champ Saint Privé, which assured their passage over the river and might have been a thorn in the side of the French next day. By any modern standards the conduct of Talbot and Suffolk richly merited a court-martial—Talbot himself was soon to have Fastolf disgraced for far less culpable timidity—yet not a single observer suggests that those experienced soldiers were in the least remiss. As for their inertia next day, it passes any comprehension but their own.

The morning of Saturday, the 7th of May, saw Joan astir at dawn, for she knew that she "had much to do, more than ever yet I had." She heard Mass, then had herself dressed in her armour, and her host offered her a fish for breakfast. She told him to keep it for her supper and she would bring "a Godon" back to share it with her, by way of the bridge that no one had crossed for seven months. Then she hurried off to join the captains.

On her arrival at the Burgundy Gate she found a

threatening situation. The ill-feeling between the town and the garrison had boiled over at the worst possible moment. The burghers, wanting to be in at the death, were trying to crowd past the watch; old Raoul de Gaucourt, veteran of the Turkish wars, Governor of the town and commander of the watch, was refusing to let them by. He despised them as soldiers, had little more use for their idol the Maid (though he would testify for her twenty-seven years later) and was altogether in favour of postponing the attack until the king should send a further draft of real soldiers. He had this to be said for him at the moment, that the militia had done themselves no great credit the previous day and that the council of captains had decided to leave those who were still in the town behind to guard against a sudden rush from Saint Laurent. But the mob was in no temper to listen to reason and threats of lynching were loud in the air as Joan rode up.

She made straight for Gaucourt, called him an evil man and ordered him to let the people through. On the grounds of tactical prudence she was wrong to interfere; also in her anger she jumped to the unfair conclusion that Gaucourt, in trying to keep the Orleanais away from the battlefield, was hoping to put a spoke in the attack altogether. But one can hardly blame her for standing by the people who had stood by her Dauphin with all that they possessed on earth . . . and whatever their present defects as soldiers, it was they and their kind who would save the cause of Charles VII after the godless mercenaries had nearly wrecked it.

It was not an easy task that lay before the French that day. There were only six hundred men in the Tourelles, but they were a picked force from the best

army in the world. The position had been strong enough to defeat even that army with a loss of two hundred and forty—serious for that time—the previous October, and since then the English had strengthened it enormously. As Joan surveyed it she saw a deep broad ditch which had to be crossed under fire from the massive square rampart beyond: a treacherous, slithering descent down the near slope and up the farther one in the teeth of an almost invisible enemy. Then came the parapet, to be crossed only by hand-to-hand fighting during which the advantage of numbers was almost lost, for there was no place on it except for a limited number, and the gunners and archers in support had to stop firing for fear of hitting their own. And looming behind were the mighty round walls of the Tourelles, to which the defenders could retreat over a drawbridge and shut themselves in with a moat—really an arm of the river—in front and the broken bridge behind.

At ten o'clock the guns, mounted where the Augustines had stood the day before, began to roar and the cross-bowmen let fly from behind their mobile shelters, the English replying with culverin and long-bow, in whose use they were the undisputed masters. This duel at long range—four to five hundred yards for the guns, less than half for the arrows—was meant to do no more than shake the other side's morale and search out its weakness; even a real superiority of fire was seldom decisive when one side was behind walls.

Presently the French archers moved closer: through them filtered the "pioneers" with thick bundles of twigs for filling the ditch; and when a satisfactory flooring had been raised the scaling party dashed up, placed their ladders and started to climb. They were beaten back,

but returned. It was a process of attrition, an attempt to exhaust and thin the enemy before the decisive assault was delivered.

This was led by Joan in person at about one o'clock, after an hour's pause for rest and food. Once more the guns hurled their stones and the bowmen their arrows on or over the heads of the defenders: then, as the Maid's banner was raised by its bearer, she dashed into the ditch with a loud cheer, her men following at her sides and heels. She was the first to place a ladder, the first to fight her way to the palisade itself. For an instant her gleaming figure stood outlined against the sky motioning the others to come on. An instant later she toppled over backward, an arrow's shaft protruding from the opening in her armour above her right breast; and the English, beside themselves with joy—for a witch's spell ended when blood left her body—rose and hurled her demoralized companions off the parapet.

She was carried to the rear, where the arrow was removed—an intensely painful operation, since it had gone clear through her shoulder. Some of the men wanted to "charm" the wound by pronouncing an incantation over it, but Joan would not allow it, saying she would rather die than be healed through a sinful superstition. A dressing, more efficient as well as canonical, was prepared of olive oil and lard, and she was put into a quiet place to rest.

A good many if not most of Joan's predictions were put into her mouth by other people, and some that were undoubtedly hers are too vague or ambiguous to prove that she was a genuine clairvoyant. But there is no escape from the fact that she foretold that wound to the king, for a letter written on April 22nd, 1429, two weeks

before, and inscribed on the register of the Chamber of Accounts of Brabant, quotes her as saying that "she would be wounded in the battle before Orleans by a missile, but would not die of it." The story was, as usual, considerably strengthened later, by filling in such details as the arrow and the part of her body that it was to strike. She herself at her trial merely said that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret had told her beforehand that she would be wounded, without naming the place or the exact style of the missile, and comforted her afterward so that she was well in a fortnight.

Meantime the battle slackened in her absence and presently died away. The chieftains held a consultation, decided that nothing more could be done on that day, and at four o'clock the Bastard gave the order, not only to cease fire, but to gather the guns and other material for a general withdrawal into the city.

The news was carried to Joan where she lay in pain on her improvised litter. At once she jumped to her feet and ran to find the Bastard. Passionately she begged him to wait a little while longer, to allow her to try one more assault, pledging the word of her heavenly counsel that the place was surely theirs. And she added, with one of the shrewd flashes of insight that never left her in her moments of highest exaltation, that the English must be quite as tired by now as their assailants.

The Bastard hesitated and incalculable consequences hung on his next word. Had he refused, the siege of Orleans might in the end have been raised somehow, though by what means it is difficult to see. If the English were not strong enough to take the city by storm, the French had no remote idea that they could either drive them away or prevent reinforcements coming up: actually

Bedford was at that moment collecting a strong force to be sent shortly under Fastolf, and another army would be ready to sail from England two months later. But numbers did not count, at least in comparison with the precarious state of French morale. A defeat of half their available strength in front of the Tourelles by six hundred English and then what? The first thing, beyond a doubt, would have been a violent reversal of popular feeling toward Joan. She had promised, so often, so fervently, that they had but to fight and God would give victory. She had publicly declared only three days previously, on the 4th, that the siege would be raised within five days. Had she returned to the town with a beaten army those hysterical folk would at once have risen of a certainty to brand her as a false prophetess, and pointed to her wound as evidence that God had abandoned her if indeed He had ever chosen her. She would have been lucky not to end then and there under a mob's heels, disgraced and soon forgotten.

But the Bastard, luckily for his own fame, was never able to deny her to her face. He cancelled the retreat, and she joyously hurried off to arrange the preparation for a fresh assault. First, however, with the instinct of a born commander, she gave orders that the tired and hungry soldiers who were to take part with her should be rested and fed. Then she mounted her horse and rode a short distance off, where she knelt a quarter of an hour alone in prayer.

Again the guns roared and the storming party went out with their ladders. For a long time still the issue hung in doubt, the English, though terrified at Joan's reappearance when they thought her done for, fighting with such magnificent courage as to draw shouts of

admiration even from their enemies. But now they had more than the attack in front to withstand, and Joan's persistence was splendidly justified. Throughout most of the day the guns in Orleans had kept up a desultory bombardment of the Tourelles without causing the defenders even to turn their heads. But suddenly the activities on that side took an altogether different colour. The townsfolk had been working away with an old piece of lead gutter and some planking until they had fashioned a device for crossing the gap in the bridge—the accounts for the material and the carpenter's labour still exist. When the contraption was finished five hundred men under Nicolas de Girême, commander of the Knights of Malta, dragged it to the spot, laid it down and ran across it to the English outwork on that side, intending to batter down the door of the Tourelles and smoke out the defenders.

Some of the English facing Joan were drawn off to counter the new menace in the rear and the fire of the rest perceptibly slackened. But the French too were considerably spent, and once more the vigour of their assault was falling off. Joan's standard-bearer, holding her banner at the edge of the ditch, grew tired and handed it to a Basque standing by. d'Aulon noticed the transfer and was afraid lest the Basque would withdraw and tempt the soldiers still pressing the attack to follow; in that event the English might dash out and capture the standard itself, thus inflicting a disastrous blow both to Joan's prestige and French morale. d'Aulon said to the Basque, "If I go up to the foot of the rampart, will you follow me?"

The question was not artless: d'Aulon "knew the man to be brave." Together the two descended into the

fosse and slipped foot by foot toward the wall of the rampart, d'Aulon protecting himself with his heavy shield against stones. But Joan, in the thick of what fighting was left, caught sight of her cherished banner in a stranger's hands and rushed up to retrieve it. She seized it by the shaft; the man did not recognize her in the confusion and wrestled with her for its possession. d'Aulon, seeing only the satin waving back and forth, thought that the Basque was giving the signal of retreat and called, "Ha, Basque, is that what you promised me?" The man, indignant at the imputation, wrenched the standard out of its owner's hands and ran forward with it to join d'Aulon.

The curious scene had an electrical effect on the lagging troops. Seeing the Maid's standard advancing right up to the rampart they dashed in once more to follow. Joan apparently caught up with d'Aulon and his companion, obtained possession of the banner, and cried, "Watch till the tail of my standard touches the wall!"

She struggled forward and up. "It touches!" someone shouted.

"Then enter," she called out, "the place is yours." The men poured in wave upon wave, "each man fighting as if he thought himself immortal," in the words of the *Journal of the Siege*, and the English knew that they could hold them no longer. They rushed for the drawbridge over the moat in order to shut themselves in the Tourelles before the enemy from the other side should take it or make it untenable, but most of them never reached it, for the townsfolk had towed a boat full of combustibles under the bridge and set the supports ablaze. As the English fought their way back step by step, Glasdale and the others heroically holding up the French advance



## JOAN OF ARC

as best as they could, the drawbridge collapsed under them and the river swallowed them up.

An instant earlier Joan, seeing what was about to happen, called out to the English commander, "Glasdale, Glasdale, yield thyself, yield thyself to the King of Heaven. You called me a harlot, but I have pity on your souls and those of your men." But Glasdale was not of the breed that yielded, certainly to no woman and least of all to one whom he honestly considered a limb of Satan. He went with the rest, fully armed, and was, like them, drowned in the river. Joan wept for the souls of so many brave men dead unshriven. Her compatriots were equally moved at the thought of "the great loss to the valiant French, who would have had *grand finance* for their ransom" but for the unfortunate stubbornness of Glasdale and his fellows.

The two hundred survivors in the Tourelles, seeing their leaders gone and themselves hopelessly cut off, surrendered without further struggle. Three hundred English were killed during the day, nearly all after the outwork had been stormed, and about a hundred French perished in the various assaults. As usual the real killing had taken place after the battle was won.

The records do not say whether Joan led her Godon over the bridge to share her fish with her for supper. More likely she went home as quickly as she could, had her normal evening meal of watered wine with bits of bread broken into it, and retired to nurse her throbbing shoulder. In the city the bells rang and people flocked to the churches to hear the *Te Deum* chanted.

The following morning they awoke to a novel sight. The ring of forts that had so long threatened them lay silent and deserted, and the whole English force were

drawn up in battle array in the plain beyond. They sent a challenge to the town to come out and fight; some of the captains were in favour of accepting, others against. Joan was sent for and came without putting on her armour because her shoulder would not bear the weight. After surveying the enemy's position she said, "Let them go. It does not please God that you fight them to-day. You will have them another time."

If the facts are as given in the chronicle, she was wrong: an enemy in retreat is always at a disadvantage. Perhaps she felt herself too disabled or the troops unequal to an engagement after their previous day's labours. It is also possible that she considered the English position, carefully selected in advance on Henry V's model, too strong to be attacked: twice in the next few months she declined to butt her head into that invincible formation, leaving the English with no option but to stay where they were till they got bored or come out and meet her on even terms. The besiegers, seeing that they could not tempt the French to another Agincourt or Rouvray, marched off, a troop of cavalry under la Hire hovering on their flanks until it was sure they would not return. The siege of Orleans was over.

What is it that gives the relief of Orleans the stature of an epic and makes its heroine immortal? It is not really a story of genius or even of courage triumphing against great odds. The odds if anything were against the English and by any military calculation they never had a chance of taking the city. Their opportunity was given them through the demoralization of the French, and they threw it away with both hands. Even after Joan's arrival they could have held on had they not sat in their forts like men of wood; they presented her with

the Tourelles by refusing to move to its assistance after they saw on May 7th that the attack was genuine; and even its loss does not account for their retreat on the 8th, for they were still in a stronger position than they had been during two-thirds of the siege. They were neither out-manceuvred, outfought nor seriously outnumbered, they were simply overawed. In short, their long moral superiority had been abruptly taken away from them and given to their enemies by the intervention of a seventeen year old girl.

They were beaten by an idea and the form that the idea took was faith. It is absurd to belittle Joan's military contribution as some writers (the professional soldiers are not amongst them) have done, though it would be equally absurd to maintain that she was the gifted captain at Orleans that she became when experience had ripened her. She saw opportunities that other men had overlooked, rediscovered principles that they had forgotten, because she had one of those rare intellects that is able to think for itself. But even her natural flair for generalship would not have enabled her to accomplish in nine days what the Bastard and his colleagues had failed to accomplish in two hundred had she not brought with her, and been able through her personality to impart, that conviction of *right* on her side which clarified like a sunburst the issues in the minds of a perplexed and discouraged people. It was right that King Charles should have his realm; it was wrong that the English should steal the Duke of Orleans' city while they held his body.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge that right is on their side

<sup>1</sup> This idea, born of pure chivalry, was so strong in her that she said at her trial that she had had more revelations regarding the Duke than any man alive except the Dauphin himself. She had in mind to invade England to obtain his release if the English refused to free him otherwise.

brings to people the surety that God is also, and the leader who can construe a cause in terms of holiness is certain of the best that his followers can give him. For that reason the soldiers of Orleans submitted to follow her "as if they had been immortal"; and thanks to her natural capacity they were well led. It is not in terms of numbers and tactics that epics are written, but of valour inspired by a large and simple faith in the justice of a cause.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CAMPAIGN OF THE LOIRE

ON the very afternoon after the departure of the English the army raised with so much effort began to break up. A small part of it went with the Bastard, the Marshal Boussac de Saint Sévère, Poton de Saintrailles and others to attack Jargeau, ten miles up the river, into which the Earl of Suffolk had withdrawn with some six or eight hundred of the late besieging force. The French tried several assaults in the course of three hours, then, finding the water in the moat too deep, gave it up; exactly a month later they were to try again with Joan present and reach a different conclusion. The rest of the units were marched off under their respective captains, glad to be looking after their own estates once more after the ardours of the siege.

The French system of raising and maintaining armies was as much responsible as anything for their inability to make head against the invasion. The soldiers were primarily responsible to their feudal leaders or their communes rather than to the crown, which in general engaged them for one specific task and held them together only so long as it could pay them—or make them believe that it intended to. The English method was distinctly superior, since their troops were directly indentured to the king for a definite period of service, usually six months, more regularly paid and better

administered. Being in a foreign country they were also less likely to drift off on their own, though when times were hard or pillage exceptionally promising desertions were common enough amongst them too. But at least it was desertion and not lawful whimsy.

Joan left on the Tuesday, after a touching farewell from the people of Orleans, who vowed to remember her with eternal gratitude and, strangely, kept their promise. Her companion to Blois was Gilles de Rais, surely the strangest pair that ever rode side by side on this earth: Joan of Arc and Bluebeard, the girl sent by God, the man who sold himself to the devil—a study for a woodcut by Dürer! At Blois she was received with the gorgeous noisy pageantry of which the Middle Ages alone knew the secret, and from there she proceeded after a day or two to meet the Dauphin at Tours.

He arrived from Chinon on the 13th and she rode out to meet him carrying her standard. He advanced from amongst his retinue and she from the group of notabilities who had accompanied her from the town. As they came together she bowed deep in the saddle and removed her hat. (Not the grey page's *chaperon* now, but something gayer, of red or green.) Charles too uncovered, raised her and kissed her in front of the two companies, as if she had been of the blood royal. Together they entered the gates of the city.

What Joan's sensations were at that meeting it would not be hard to guess. Partly triumph, no doubt, that she had been able to redeem her promise and justify her Voices in such abundant measure; but much more, a deep and humble gratitude that he had given her the opportunity, for to her Charles of Valois always remained something more than a mortal man. But his feelings

were more obscure and complicated. The jealousy of his nature made it unendurable to him that other people should perform distinguished deeds, even on his behalf, of which he knew himself incapable; and Joan's achievement would already have been discounted by the two masters of his council, the Chamberlain Georges de la Tremoille and the Archbishop of Rheims, Regnault de Chartres, who hated and were hated by the faction at court that had adopted her. But Charles had one knack that is often more useful to a king than many virtues, a sense of the kingly gesture. When he wrote to his loyal towns of the relief of Orleans he singled out Joan for special mention; he followed the kiss by a solicitous inquiry after her health and the advice to take a rest; and with the arms that he awarded her on June 2nd he gave her the right, enjoyed only by the most notable of his subjects, to carry the arms of France on her banner.

But the girl had not travelled all the way from Domrémy merely to collect marks of the royal favour. The arms meant nothing to her and in fact she never wore them, leaving that to her family who were quite ready to avail themselves of the privilege, while the advice to rest nearly drove her frantic, for she knew what it meant. The Dauphin and the peace-party in the council, more astonished than anybody at the victory of Orleans, were preparing to sit down as before and wait to see what would happen next. But of Joan's "year and a little more" the little more was already spent.

From Tours the court moved to the castle of Loches, not far away to the south-east on the River Indre, and there she joined battle with her opponents on the whole course of future strategy. There were four possible alternatives. Some of the soldiers proposed to invade

Normandy, the seat of the English power, largely because many of them had lands in that region of which they had been dispossessed; others favoured an immediate move on Paris. Trémoille and his followers still clung to the hope that their diplomacy would bring the Duke of Burgundy back to a sense of his feudal obligations and separate him from the English alliance. Joan and her supporters urged that the necessary first step to further military operations was to have the Dauphin crowned at Rheims.

The four alternatives really boiled down to two, one a policy of action, the other of waiting. The Normandy proposal was dismissed, since the country on which the army would have to live was so devastated that there was no hope of feeding it through a protracted campaign, and the attack on Paris was really an integral, though subsequent, part of the coronation scheme. Trémoille's party urged that any aggressive action was likely to estrange Philip the Good still further, as a march to Rheims would involve an invasion of his territory and Paris itself was more or less under his jurisdiction; moreover they doubted whether Joan's Voices would be up to the task of raising, equipping and paying a sufficient force for so heavy an undertaking. Joan and those who thought with her held that Charles would never have the whole-hearted support of the country until he was duly anointed with the holy oil brought to Clovis by Saint Rémy; that once his subjects were united behind him the resources for further warfare would easily be found; and that the wily Philip would only come over when a few solid French victories convinced him that he was backing the wrong horse: Joan herself put this point succinctly a little later when she said that "they would



only obtain peace from the Duke of Burgundy at the point of a lance."

It is almost impossible to deny that she was right in her general conception. Apart from her inspiration she was an ordinary girl of the people, in a better position than the courtiers to know how several millions of people of the sort amongst which she was bred would react to the news of the Dauphin's coronation. Moreover, she had passed only two months before across the very land that lay between the Loire and Rheims and had observed something of its state. Whether it would not have been wiser to have gone straight to Paris is another matter: the Dukes of Burgundy and Bedford were at odds, the Regent had been so shaken by the defeat at Orleans that he had withdrawn his main army from the capital for fear of having it cooped up there in case the Dauphin advanced, the population of the city was half-prepared to welcome back their Armagnac sovereign on what terms they could. The opportunity was allowed to slip, and whether the gains resulting from putting the coronation first were sufficient compensation must always puzzle Joan's historians.

It is probable, however, that even had she been in favour of taking Paris first she would not have had her way immediately. The business of preparing an operation on such a scale was too vast, councils too divided, faith in her at court far from what it was amongst the common people. Nevertheless her policy of action prevailed so far that it was decided to clear the English out of their strongholds on the Loire.<sup>1</sup> With temperamental im-

<sup>1</sup> It is quite probable that two famous theologians, Jean Gerson, ex-Chancellor of the University of Paris, and Jacques Gélú, Archbishop of Embrun, who both wrote long papers in Joan's favour to the king, had a good deal to do with making up his mind. The arguments are too long





patience Joan opposed the compromise at first, as giving further excuse for delay, and only reconciled herself to it as the hour for battle drew near. It seems a wise decision, since it would have been dangerous to go on to Rheims with an enemy in the rear, and it proved a lucky one for Joan.

There are two interesting pictures of her during the month of inactivity while the debate was going on and the army being reassembled, the one showing her before the resolution to resume fighting was taken, the other after.

The Dauphin was in his closet with his confessor, Gerard de Mâchet, two of his councillors, Christopher d'Harcourt and the Lord of Trèves, and the Bastard, who tells the story, when Joan rapped and entered. Going at once to the Dauphin she fell on her knees, embraced his, and said, "Gentle Dauphin, do not hold so many interminable councils, but go quickly to Rheims to claim your crown. I beg it on my knees. Doubt not, you will obtain your consecration."

Harcourt asked, "Is it your Voices that advise this?"

Joan answered, "Yes, they press me incessantly."

"Don't you want to say here, in the king's presence," continued Harcourt, "the manner of your Counsel when it speaks to you?"

Joan flushed. "I see what you mean," she began, "and will tell you gladly." But there she paused.

The king himself, who by her own account was the only man in the room who knew, from her at least,

to quote, but in general they hold that Joan is entitled to belief on the strength of precedents like Deborah and Judith, that a proper reading of the Scriptures shows no cause why her Voices should not be genuine, and that—excellent men!—the proof of the pudding is after all in the eating.

about the Voices (she dropped more hints, however, than she was aware of), prompted her with something between kindness and curiosity, "Are you sure that you want to say in the presence of these people?"

"Yes," she said, and added slowly, "when I am unhappy in any way, because people are reluctant to believe what I tell them from God, I withdraw and pray to Him, complaining that those to whom I speak do not believe me readily enough. When my prayer is ended I hear a voice saying, 'Daughter of God, go, go, go, I shall come to your aid, go!' And when I hear that voice I rejoice greatly; I should always like to hear it."

As she repeated the words, "she was in marvellous exaltation, her eyes raised to Heaven." It is the first public questioning she submitted to about the nature of her Voices (except possibly at Poitiers, of which we have no record in this respect) and though she was to undergo many others, far more exhaustive ones, that blush and the naivety of her confession tell a good deal that all her judges' subtlety would not be able to drag from her.

The other portrait is of a different sort. It is contained in a letter written by two young men, Guy and André de Laval, who had just come to join the royal forces, to their mother and grandmother, the latter the widow of the illustrious Constable du Guesclin. The two youths—the younger, André, was only twenty—were related to all the greatest families of Brittany, and André was to become a Marshal of France. The letter was written on June 8th from Selles-en-Berri, whither they had ridden two days earlier with the king from Loches to join the Maid, who had gone on ahead. They

(or rather Guy, who wrote the letter) tell how she came out and

"greeted me and my brother graciously, completely armed except for her head and holding a lance in her hand. Later, when we had dismounted in Selles, I went to her lodging to see her. She had wine brought and told me that we would soon be drinking in Paris. She seemed to me a being altogether divine, to look at and to listen to. She left this day after vespers for Romorantin, three leagues from here, to join the forces that are being assembled, the Marshal Boussac and a great number of soldiers and militia with her. I saw her dressed in plain white armour, except her head, a little axe in her hand, approach her huge black courser at the door of her lodging, but he shied away and would not let her mount. Thereupon she said, 'Lead him to the cross,' which was in front of a church in the street. And she mounted without his moving, as if he were bound to the spot. She then turned to the portal of the church and said in the gentle voice of a woman, 'You, priests and churchmen, make processions and prayers to God.' And as she departed she cried, 'Forward,' her standard furled in the hand of a graceful page, her little axe in her own. . . ."

There is something so eternally, delightfully boyish in the letter that another paragraph of it is worth repeating :

"To-day (June 8th) my Lord of Alençon, the Bastard of Orleans and Gaucourt are going to join the Maid. You have sent I don't know what letter to my cousin Trémoille and to the Lord of Trèves, which has induced the king to keep us with him until the Maid has completed her attack on the English in the places round

Orleans. The artillery is ready and the Maid is certain she will soon rejoin the king. She told me that when we take the road to Rheims I shall go with her, but may it please God that I shall not have to wait until then but go where the fighting is soon to begin. My brother says the same. . . ."

It is a pleasant sentimental link, this letter, between Joan of Arc and Bertrand du Guesclin, her heroic predecessor. There was apparently still another, for the letter speaks of Joan having sent three days before "a very small gold ring" to the widow of the great constable, with apologies for not having anything more suitable to the lady's rank.

The two prophecies in the letter are worth special notice. She said to Guy de Laval—she said it to others too—that she would be in Paris shortly and that she would soon return to the king victorious from the expedition on which she was departing. One prediction was to be fulfilled within ten days, the other never.

The titular commander of the army at Romorantin was John Duke of Alençon, cousin to the king. He was the fifth of his name and the fourth to spend his life fighting against the English (with whom he entered years later into treasonable correspondence, like so many of Joan's brothers-in-arms). His great-grandfather had been killed at Crécy, his grandfather had been a companion of du Guesclin, his father had died of many wounds received at Agincourt after he had broken through the English line, killed the Duke of York and brought Henry V himself to earth. The young man himself, now twenty-three, had been dug out from under a heap of corpses at Verneuil in 1424 and spent five years in the castle of

Crotoy, near Abbeville, until released on the payment of an enormous ransom.

The affection between him and Joan was instant and spontaneous. When the Dauphin presented them to each other at Chinon she said, "You are right welcome. The more there are here of the royal blood of France the better." It was certainly true, but that easy greeting in the king's presence sounds as if she were taking a great deal on herself. From that moment he became "my pretty duke" (*mon beau duc*) until the misfortunes of war and the interference of the courtiers separated them for ever.

A few days later she rode over with him to visit his wife, who was the daughter of the Duke of Orleans, at the nearby abbey of Saint-Florent-les-Saumur, where the Alençons lived because the English had expropriated their estates in the north. The duchess embraced Joan warmly and tried to get her to use her influence against the duke's going to the wars: "Jeannette, I fear greatly for my husband," she said, "he has just come out of prison and we had to spend so much money for his ransom that I would gladly beg him to stay at home."

The good lady was putting the feelings of many a rich family of the time in a nutshell—bereavement through the death of a loved one was a less likely misfortune than impoverishment through his capture; the enemy himself saw to that. Joan answered, "Do not worry, Madame, I will bring him back whole, in as good condition as he is or better." She remembered that promise under fire, and redeemed it in a curious way.

The duke for some reason did not go to Orleans, it may be because the defence of the town was a family matter in which the Bastard naturally took precedence



and Alençon was of too high rank to fight under him. In the subsequent campaign the duke, as nearest in blood to the sovereign, took over the duties of his lieutenant-general as a matter of course. The *Journal of the Siege* says that "he was expressly ordered to act entirely by the advice of the Maid." Laval's letter, Alençon's own testimony, the chronicle of his servant Perceval de Cagny<sup>1</sup> and the actual conduct of the operations all point to the conclusion that such an order was actually given and observed.

On the 9th of June the army, between two and three thousand strong, was in Orleans. A day was spent in collecting the guns and other siege material, largely contributed by the inhabitants of the town, and on the 10th Alençon led his force to Jargeau, a fortified town ten miles to the east on the south bank of the river, the ordnance and provisions following by boat. That night was spent in a wood near their destination, to give the boats and various reinforcements that were drifting in a chance to come up. When the march was resumed the next day Alençon's command numbered perhaps five thousand. There were not eight hundred under Suffolk in Jargeau, but the place was well fortified and considered able to withstand a long siege. The defences were of the usual sort, earthworks to guard the bridge over the moat that had defeated the Bastard a month before, a strong wall round the town and a massive citadel with a tower inside.

The following day, as the advance guard was moving forward to reconnoitre, Suffolk, showing more initiative than during his whole stay at Orleans, charged out and

<sup>1</sup> Most of the medieval chroniclers were attached to great houses and their impartiality is in consequence not always above suspicion.

scattered them—an excellent medicine for his demoralized troops. Alençon and Joan had been at fault in allowing the advance-guard to get out of touch—a common failing, often a fatal one, as at Rouvray. But she retrieved her error immediately. As soon as she saw the men running back, she seized her standard, called out, “Forward, forward, with good heart,” and hurled herself at the head of a small company against the advancing English. The shock halted them: more French came up, and Suffolk was driven back over the bridge into the town. Joan sent a summons to the Earl to surrender, but the message was ignored and the French spent the rest of the day completing their dispositions in the outskirts. Alençon naively admits that no sentries were posted that night and “that God must have been with us, for if the English had sortied we should have suffered great damage.” The responsibility for the sentries was the Marshal’s, so presumably the fault was his, but the commanders must have been unusually slack nevertheless.

On the morning of the 12th a violent bombardment was begun, which lasted all day and well into the night. It was a genuine performance this time, intended to breach the walls in preparation for an assault, and no mere perfunctory demonstration. All the witnesses agree that Joan was in direct command of the artillery, for whose use she had a peculiar knack. After all it took no special training to lay those primitive guns or to select the targets whose destruction would be most useful; what it chiefly wanted was a good eye, coolness, persistence and a sense of the exact object of the attack—things people are born with rather than taught. It is related that while she was watching the effect of the bombardment she noticed a culverin pointing from the

walls straight at the Duke of Alençon and drew him out of the way: another man stepped into his place and was instantly killed. So she kept her promise to the duchess.

Suffolk began to be nervous and entered into a parley with la Hire in the hope of calling off that destructive fire. Alençon, Joan and some other captains were in consultation when the news was brought to them, and an angry message was sent to the Gascon to stop. The mood of the French was no longer that of the *escarmouche grande et terrible*, but of seeing a job once begun through to the end.

The next morning, Sunday the 13th, the battering was resumed, and a large breach was made in the walls. The destruction inside the town was also considerable, and the third round from a huge gun called the Shepherdess, presented by the people of Orleans, sent the tower of the citadel toppling over with a crash. Whereupon Suffolk, falling back on a trite ruse of chivalry, sent out a herald under a white flag to ask Alençon for a truce of fifteen days, at the end of which he would surrender unless succoured earlier: for he now had certain tidings that Fastolf was on the way.

Alençon turned to Joan for advice. She sent back answer that the English could have their lives if they evacuated the place with nothing more than the clothes—armour apart—on their backs; otherwise the assault would be launched at once. Suffolk, not yet convinced that surrender was inevitable, declined her terms. "Then on to the assault, my pretty duke," said Joan. She would one day have to answer to her judges for refusing to let Suffolk take her in.

Alençon, dazed by her incontinent speed, suggested that there was no hurry; the English commander might

change his mind or something else happen to stave off the need for violent action. She, reading Suffolk's alarm more accurately, replied, "Fear not! One must attack when God wills. Strike and God will strike for you." When he still hesitated she added, "Ah, my pretty duke, are you afraid? Don't you remember that I promised your wife I would bring you back safe and sound?" He gave way and a moment later the heralds' trumpets were blaring the signal for the storming party to move forward.

The assault lasted between three and four hours, never slackening, the French after each repulse hurling themselves forward with undiminished fury. The last wave was led by Joan in person. Followed as always by her standard she led the way to the wall, placed a ladder against it and was about to leap for the parapet when a heavy stone struck her on the helmet and knocked her to earth. For a moment she was dazed, then raising herself she shouted, "Up, up, friends . . . the Lord has now delivered the place into your hands." Her men, electrified at hearing her voice after her fall, swarmed up like demons and the enemy, correspondingly dismayed, faltered for a critical instant. So impetuous was the French advance that most of the English had no time to fall back into the citadel. Suffolk and one of his brothers were taken on the bridge, another was killed together with most of the garrison, and the town was sacked, not even the church being spared. Those poor little French cities suffered when the invader took them and suffered all over again for having let themselves be taken when their own countrymen delivered them. The same evening the victors, after leaving a garrison in Jargeau, returned to Orleans.

The manner of Suffolk's capture is straight out of the pages of Malory. As he was fighting his way across the bridge he was surrounded and saw that further resistance was hopeless. A French man-at-arms called on him to yield.

"Are you a gentleman?" demanded the Englishman haughtily.

"Yes," replied the other.

"Are you a knight?"

"No," admitted the Frenchman. Whereupon the earl knighted him on the spot with his sword before handing it over. Another chronicler says, however, that he refused to surrender to anyone but Joan, "who is the most valiant woman in the world and has subjugated and thrown us into confusion." It is a pretty story but somehow sounds even less plausible than the other; the English nobles would as soon have yielded to the devil as to his servant the Maid.

Alençon's army had now swollen to seven or eight thousand, possibly more, and during the 14th remained encamped on both sides of the river in order not to impose too great a strain on the city. That night Joan summoned Alençon to her and said, "To-morrow afternoon I want to go and see the garrison of Meung. Have the men ready to leave at that time." The incident is reported by Alençon's own chronicler: it seems to leave little doubt as to who was giving the orders in that army.

Meung, under the command of Sir Thomas Scales and a son of the Earl of Warwick, lay seven miles to the west of Orleans on the same bank of the Loire. The plan was to seize its bridge, reunite the two halves of the army on the right bank, leave a detachment to watch the town and go on to the capture of the more important

stronghold of Beaugency, another seven miles downstream, whither Talbot had withdrawn the previous month.

The march began, for a wonder, on time, early in the afternoon of the 15th, Alençon in command on the right bank, Joan on the left. It was his task to keep the garrison of the town occupied while she attacked the bridge, which lay a short distance to the east of it across a meadow. But the English, seeing themselves hopelessly outnumbered, gave up the bridge without a struggle and withdrew behind their walls as the French came in sight. Joan crossed over and proceeded swiftly westward, Alençon following after posting his watch over the place. Meantime the guns and stores were being floated downstream on the rapid current and early next morning Joan had her batteries in position against the walls of Beaugency.

The whole conception was excellent, all speed and no waste motions. There was no need to dally at Meung, for it could be pinched out at leisure after the larger stronghold fell; and the decision to attack Beaugency itself, instead of wasting time assaulting the bridge from the other side of the river, avoided the mistake of the English at Orleans, for if the town fell the bridge naturally fell with it. Talbot apparently appreciated the extraordinary change that had come over the French, for he left with 250 men to meet Fastolf and urge him to hurry if anything was to be saved on the Loire at all. It was a serious blunder, for only 400 men, under Richard Guetin and Matthew Gough, remained behind to withstand the French and hold them there till the relief could arrive.

After a short bombardment the garrison of Beaugency, seeing that there was no hope of defending the whole town, withdrew fighting to the castle and bridge, intending to hold out there until relieved. The French pressed

forward to within range of both when news came in that threw their leaders into a flutter: Arthur of Brittany, Count of Richemont and Constable of France, was arriving to join in the attack.

It was a cruel dilemma for young Alençon. He had a strict injunction from the king not to let Richemont have any part in the expedition, for the constable was the deadly enemy of Trémoille, whom he had introduced to the royal favour and who had retaliated by having his benefactor banished from the court. His first impulse was to withdraw his forces altogether: "If the constable comes, I go," he said to Joan. She replied that it was better to make use of him and undertook to square the matter with the Dauphin. The other captains joined in the argument and operations were apparently halted for the day.

Joan so far prevailed that next morning the assault on the castle was about to begin when Richemont came riding up with 1200 men. The duke thought of trying to drive him off by force; according to Richemont's own chronicler Joan agreed with him, but various of the captains stepped in with the objection that "there are some of us here who love the constable better than all the Maids in France."

She then rode out to meet the newcomer, a small, swarthy man, in order to parley with him. As she came up he said, "Joan, they tell me that you wanted to fight me. I don't know whether you are from God or not. If you are, I don't fear you, for He knows my good will; and if you are from the devil I fear you even less."

According to Alençon himself, who was present throughout, there is nothing about the captains setting themselves in opposition to himself and Joan. They rode forward

together to meet the intruder and tried to induce him to go away until he had made his peace with the king. While they were parleying a scout came up with the news that Fastolf had been sighted and Joan, taking the responsibility for so grave an act on herself, turned to Richemont and said, "Noble Constable, you haven't come through any act of mine, but since you are here, you are welcome."

The Count of Richemont was a dangerous character, a man with a grandiose dream of founding a great dominion in the west resembling the Duke of Burgundy's in the east. He was quite as treacherous as Philip the Good or his own older brother the Duke of Brittany, and he played fast and loose with whoever would serve his own particular purposes, including the English.<sup>1</sup> But he was a soldier, perhaps the best on the French side in the closing stages of the Hundred Years' War; it was he who led the campaign that ended in the capture of Paris four years after Joan's death. He showed his quality as soon as he was received into the force before Beaugency by going over the various dispositions and sending a detachment to strengthen the feeble guard that Alençon had left over Meung. His men, as the newcomers, took over the duties of the watch.

Meantime Fastolf, spurred on by Talbot, had at last started to march in earnest—a little too late, and altogether against his will. After learning of the fall of Jargeau he had fallen back to Joinville, twenty miles to the north of Orleans, to wait for reinforcements that Bedford had promised to send and was moving heaven and earth to collect. Talbot arrived at Joinville on the 16th and a

<sup>1</sup> His title was, in fact, taken from Richmond in Yorkshire, and he had, like Bedford, married a sister of Philip the Good.



council of war was immediately summoned. Fastolf urged that his men were not only outnumbered but completely demoralized since the coming of the Maid, the French correspondingly "reinvigorated"—a new argument for an English commander; he advised leaving Beaugency to its fate and waiting for the promised reinforcements before risking an action. Talbot, one of the genuine bull-dog strain, a reckless fighter but altogether inferior general, pounded the table and swore by God and Saint George that he would go out with his two hundred and fifty personal followers if need be rather than that England should be disgraced. Fastolf was overruled: the army was ordered to be ready to march in the morning. Early that day he attempted one final protest, pleading that if they were defeated the whole of the conquest of the late King Henry V might be lost. But "these remonstrances were not agreeable to Lord Talbot and the other chiefs," and Fastolf reluctantly gave the order to take the road to Meung. The fate of the English cause was to be hazarded on a battle.

The advance was slow, for the cautious Fastolf wisely deployed his force so as to be ready to take up a defensive position immediately if the French were advancing to meet him. The French as a matter of fact were ready: having heard of Fastolf's approach, Joan and Alençon had drawn the bulk of their force away from Beaugency and moved out into the plain to the north ready to attack. But the enemy, on catching sight of them about three miles from Meung was able, thanks to their commander's foresight, to assume at once the formation "expressly commanded by King Henry of England, each man on foot, the archers with their pikes inclined," and an impassable hedge in the rear. Such a position was

a deadly trap in case of defeat, since no way of retreat was left open, but it suited perfectly the temperament of a stolid, highly disciplined army that did not know the meaning of panic and was always at its best when its back was against a wall. Someone in the French command appreciated that fact, for when the English sent out a challenge to combat the answer was returned, "Withdraw to your tents for the night, since it is late; but to-morrow, if God and Our Lady will, we shall see one another closer." The only new brain amongst the French chieftains was that of the girl who had refused a similar challenge outside Orleans six weeks before; most of the rest of them, including Clermont of Rouvray fame, belonged to the breed that had not been able for nearly a hundred years to see that formation without an irresistible impulse to butt their heads against it.

The English continued to Meung and began to cannonade the bridge, whose defenders Richemont had luckily reinforced. The French fell back to Beaugency and advised the garrison that Fastolf had gone off and deserted them, a conclusion to which Guetin and Gough had already sprung in error when they saw the English banners disappearing to the north-west. Shortly before midnight they offered to capitulate, and the French, with five thousand of the enemy not far off on their left, were not disposed to be harsh to the less than five hundred shut up in the castle. They were allowed to withdraw with their horses and small personal belongings on condition that they did not fight again for ten days.

Next morning, Saturday, June 18th, the English, after hearing Mass in the open air, were about to resume their bombardment of Meung bridge when a messenger arrived with the news of the surrender of Beaugency.

The blow was unexpected, since the place was considered capable of holding out for at least several days more; had Talbot not left it with over a third of the garrison it might have done so, and the French would have been caught in a pretty pickle. The surrender left them free to turn their attention elsewhere, so the English commanders, quickly collecting their guns and summoning the garrison in Meung to join them, began a swift retreat to the north. The advance-guard was led by an anonymous knight with a white standard, then followed in order the artillery and wagons, the main force under Fastolf and Talbot and, a long bowshot behind, a picked troop of cavalry to act as rear-guard.

The French arrived at Meung toward mid-morning to find the town theirs and the enemy disappeared into the blue. The usual council was held; many of the captains were in favour of letting him go: the purpose of the expedition had been achieved, many of them had a lingering—by now almost an atavistic—fear of the English in the open field, others were convinced that vast and mysterious reinforcements were awaiting Fastolf somewhere beyond the horizon—it is practically impossible to exaggerate the ignorance of armies in that time both with regard to each other's numbers and the terrain. Joan stepped in with the deciding word, "God has delivered them into our hands for their chastisement. The king to-day will have his greatest victory since a long time." When it was pointed out to her how hard it would be to find the enemy on that rolling plain of wood and brush she replied, "Ride on, we shall have our good guidance." Alençon and Richemont siding with her, the rest yielded and the pursuit began.

Behind a screen of twenty-four scouts Poton de Sain-

trailles and la Hire trotted forward with 1500 horsemen, riding in two parallel columns so as to be ready to face about and make two supporting lines in case of unexpected contact with the enemy, who was suspected, rightly, of following a converging line toward Joinville. Joan pleaded to be allowed to go ahead with the advance-guard, but the other chieftains, unwilling to risk her in one headlong cavalry charge, prevailed on her to stay behind with the main force, which was following at some five hundred yards.

The pursuit had continued about twelve miles, to within sight of a village called Patay, with the two armies still invisible to one another, when the French scouts started a stag from a clump of trees. The animal galloped off and plunged into the midst of the English, who promptly raised a shout and tried to catch him. Word was quickly passed back to the main army, where as if by instinct Alençon, Richemont and the Bastard (the last-named is the authority) turned to Joan.

"See to your spurs!" she cried in a loud voice.

"Why?" asked the astonished duke, "are we to turn our backs on them?"

"No," retorted the delighted Maid, "it's they who will turn their backs. It's you who will need your spurs to pursue them." The word went forward to the two Gascons to strike and strike hard, while the bulk of the force, handicapped by the many on foot, the tired and the wounded, pressed on as fast as possible. Joan was undoubtedly taking the chance of another Herrings in letting the advance-guard draw away, but speed was imperative if the English were to be prevented from closing up behind their array of pikes.

The English commanders, caught by surprise owing

to their own incredible negligence, had held a hasty consultation and decided on a plan of defence. On the line of march was a narrow gap in some thick, thorny underbrush through which the French would presently have to pass. Talbot led five hundred archers to hold this passage in order to delay the enemy while Fastolf was taking up the classic position of defence on a slope some distance to the rear a little outside Patay.

Talbot arrived in time—but so did la Hire and Poton. Charging through the hail of English arrows as if they had been a swarm of gnats the French horse cut the bowmen down left and right, capturing their gallant numbskull of a leader almost on the gallop. Fastolf, observing the swift collapse of his first line of defence, decided to fall back to a stronger position in the rear, at the same time closing the gap between himself and the knight with the white standard. That move in the face of the enemy was a fatal blunder: the men farther up the slope (those under the command of the anonymous knight) thought that a general retreat had begun and started to run; the panic spread to the main force, who ran also, until the whole plain was strewn with English fugitives. The French cavalry, following hot on their heels cut down 2200 men, nearly half the original strength, before nightfall.

Fastolf himself never stopped until he and his small remnant of mounted men reached Joinville. Unfortunately he had left the money for payment of the army in the town before starting south and the people, suddenly mindful of their loyalty to their Dauphin; shut the door in his face. When he reached Paris he was deprived of his Garter by Bedford on a complaint of cowardice laid

against him by Talbot. The accusation was unjust, and Sir John ultimately got his decoration back.

The victory of Patay was what Joan had predicted it would be, the greatest that the Dauphin had yet gained; in fact it was the first time that the French had destroyed an English army in the field since the landing of Henry V. The English never recovered completely from that defeat, and thenceforth were largely content to remain on the defensive in Normandy. The 18th of June 1429 was almost as significant a date in the Hundred Years' War as another 18th of June in another tremendous struggle between the same antagonists nearly four hundred years later.

When one thinks of the usual leisurely pace of warfare in those days the campaign on the Loire is nothing less than dazzling. In one week three fortified towns had been captured, one assault successfully delivered, a major battle fought and won. Those French veterans must have felt very much like Napoleon's in Italy when they grumbled that armies did not fight with their legs. The results, physical and moral, were very similar.

There have been many to question Joan's part in the management of the campaign, but it is rather difficult to see on what grounds. The witnesses who took part in it agree unanimously that she gave the orders and that in case of consultation her judgment prevailed nearly every time. But even granting that those warriors were all in a conspiracy to belittle themselves, which of them had shown, in the course of an experience lasting all or most of fourteen years, the least aptitude for conceiving and delivering such a series of lightning strokes? The Bastard and his colleagues in Orleans, who had let an inferior force coop them up for seven months? Richemont,

who did not turn up till the last day? Alençon, the nominal commander-in-chief? He is the loudest of all in praising Joan's military capacity, and if he was a fool, then the greater the responsibility Joan had to carry.

One should not confuse the science of war with its immutable principles; by any such standards Hannibal and Napoleon would pass a sorry examination by the side of the youngest graduate of Woolwich or West Point. What the rudimentary warfare of the early fifteenth century required was not a knowledge of engines but qualities of personal leadership, something that is independent of time, age and even sex. Two of France's greatest soldiers, Gaston la Foix and the Grand Condé, led immortal campaigns when they were twenty; the Lady of Clisson had defended her husband's estates against invasion in the previous century and in 1472 the eighteen years old Jeanne Hachette took a leading part in repelling Charles the Bold before Beauvais.

Joan had, to begin with, the primary requisites of a soldier—strength, endurance and courage. As a commander she gained at once an indispensable moral ascendancy over her demoralized army; she showed a perception of the necessary and proper objectives of attack; and above all she had the will to drive those attacks home swiftly and with determination until the objectives were attained. "There are many good generals in Europe," said Napoleon, "but they see too many things at once." She saw one thing at a time; she went for it and held on in the conviction that if she held on long enough the enemy would crack first. Anyone else with those qualities could have done the same, given the French preponderance in numbers and the fact that they were fighting on their own soil. Only it happened that

there was no one else, and had not been since the death of du Guesclin over a generation before.

Her idiom of command sounds quaint in our ears, but so would her costume have looked in our eyes. After all there is no reason why a soldier should not say "God wills" as readily as "God damn." Joshua was a better soldier than Joab, and Cromwell probably quite as good a one as Wellington. She formulated her strategy in her own way, expressed it in an idiom that came natural to her and that her contemporaries could understand. . . . If any critic desires to explain that wonderful week on the Loire without her, after the dismal unsuccess of the French before she came, he must postulate a direct intervention of God or some similar miracle greater than any that the chroniclers ask us to swallow.



## CHAPTER VII

### CORONATION MARCH

WITH the battle of Patay the legend of Joan blazed into full conflagration—the conflagration that was in the end to consume her. It is no mere metaphor: over and over through the long, pitiless inquisition of her judges one detects the echoes of the miracles that popular rumour heaped about her after her triumphant return to Orleans on the 19th of June, and each of them was to take substance as a faggot for her pyre. A peculiarly medieval hysteria swept over France and with astonishing swiftness over Europe. The girl from Domrémy was no longer a little peasant illuminated with God's spirit, a mortal endorsed by ancient writings and endowed with gifts of clairvoyance, but one of the immortals herself, a demigoddess come to earth. It went further than that: comparisons with Deborah and Judith, with her own Saint Catherine who had confuted the philosophers of Alexandria as she herself had those of Poitiers, were no longer good enough; her name was freely coupled with that of the Blessed Virgin herself. The hysteria was full of danger, not only for its effect on Joan, since she could not but be aware of it, but also to her mission, since expectation was raised to so high a pitch that the slightest disappointment would necessarily bring a revulsion. And disappointments were bound to come.

She herself, in the beginning at least, was aware of the

danger. Pierre de Versailles, one of the principal examiners at Poitiers, observing how men crowded to kiss her hands and feet when she went in and out of Loches Castle, had gravely warned her not to suffer that species of adoration lest she lead people into idolatry. Joan, very obviously troubled, said, "In truth I don't see how I can keep from it if God doesn't keep me from it." There is no doubt that she did try and was extraordinarily successful in keeping her own head from being turned; but there is also no doubt that something was happening inside her which was to be revealed when she had to account for herself to men who were not impressed by her successes and felt for her anything but idolatry.

Golden crowns and aureoles were seen over her head, white butterflies round her banner. Medals were struck in her name and worn by the populace to ward off evil as if she had already been dead and canonized. It was charged, with what truth we cannot say, that her images were hung over altars; if so, none of them are left. She was said to be able to read children's futures by dropping consecrated wax on their heads, an act not only of witchcraft but of sacrilege. Whenever she was accessible mothers tried to get her to sponsor their new-born infants at the baptismal font: this was in itself normal enough, and Joan thought herself the ordinary godmother who did her duty by naming a boy Charles for the king and a girl Joan for herself, but the people had different ideas, and soon it would be said that she could bring back an unbaptized infant from death by sprinkling holy water over it. It was said that "those who mock at her will surely fall dead," on the basis of the Chinon story, but it also began to be believed that she was personally

immortal. A woman said to her, "If you don't fear to go to the assaults, it's because you know that you won't be killed." Joan retorted, "I don't know that more than any other soldier," but without the slightest effect on the popular legend. Because, out of a natural modesty or an exceptional self-control, she was not seen to descend from the saddle during a long day's march, it was generally agreed that she was not subject to the natural physical needs of human beings. It would be left to her gaolers to expose that fallacy, with disastrous consequences.

There was simply no limit to what was expected of her. No one, except perhaps the court and the soldiers at her side, gave the least thought to the reasons for her military success, the keen eye, the proper use of the guns, the speed and the persistence; it was now widely believed that walls fell at her mere touch. Four weeks after the battle of Patay it was reported in a Venetian newsletter that she had taken both Paris and Rouen within five days of the victory, and that the king had entered his capital on June 24th, merely because earlier *it had been reported that she had predicted* that he would do so by that date.

She was called upon to perform such trite miracles as finding some lost gloves and determining whether a certain priest was celibate or not. When the army was being mustered for the march on Rheims she is reported to have looked about her and announced, "There is a woman amongst us." Everybody denied it, but Joan rode through the massed troops straight to the offender and said, "You are from Gien and big with child, else I should put you to death. You have already caused one child to die and I shan't let you do the same with

this." The woman burst into tears, admitted that Joan was right, and was then taken home to await the birth of the child.

But more practical things were expected of her than these simple acts of clairvoyance and identification. The people of Toulouse, suffering from the common misfortune of a debased coinage, wrote to ask her what steps they should take to restore it. The powerful Count of Armagnac sent to inquire of her which of the three claimants to the chair of Saint Peter—Martin V, the choice of the Council of Constance, Clement VIII, the successor to the Avignon popes, or Benedict XIV, the self-elected—was in the eyes of Jesus Christ His true vicar. It was putting rather a lot on Joan to ask her to review the whole question of the great schism of the west, which had already been decided by the combined wisdom of the whole of Roman Christendom. Unfortunately for her, Armagnac's messenger arrived when she was very busy, so she answered that she would consult her Voices and let him know later: a fatal slip.

Her own declared mission, to relieve Orleans, have the king crowned and deliver the realm from the English, had become secondary in the popular mind, or rather its complete success was already assumed, and people were counting upon her to abolish war, hatred and schism, institute a reign of forgiveness and justice, in short to remodel the world in the space of one short lifetime. It was reported that she had asked the king for a gift, and on his agreeing, demanded that his whole realm be formally assigned over to her in a deed drawn up by four secretaries. "Here is the poorest knight in the kingdom," she said to the bystanders, pointing at

His Majesty (who was not yet a knight, by the way). Then she had the same secretaries deliver the kingdom to God, after which in His name she solemnly re-invested Charles with it on condition that he forgive all of his blood who had rebelled against him and receive humbly all, poor or rich, who came to ask him pardon.

In the conditions of peace which she was alleged to have drawn up with the English she was supposed to have laid it down that both they and the French would for a year dress in plain grey stuff with a small cross sewn on, eat only bread and drink only water on Fridays, remain on good terms with their wives and enjoy no other woman carnally, and take a vow to fight with no one thenceforth except in defence of their patrimonies. When both sides had laid down their arms they were to join in a crusade against either the Saracens or the heretic Hussites in Bohemia—an act which seems rather inconsistent with defending one's own patrimony.

One or both of those crusades was obviously in Joan's mind. She refers to that against the Saracens in her letter to the English, and in another letter, written the following year and signed by Pasquerel, she is made to say to the struggling Hussites, whose gallant leader, induced to come to the Council of Constance by the Church's safe-conduct, had been burned by the churchmen when he got there:

"I, Joan the Maid, to say the truth, would have visited you a long time ago with my avenging arm if the war with the English had not detained me here. But unless I hear soon of your amendment, your return to the bosom of the Church, I shall perhaps leave the

English and turn against you to extirpate your fearful superstition with the sword. If you return to the light and to the true Catholic faith, send me word and I shall tell you what to do. But if you harden your hearts . . . expect me with irresistible power, human and divine. . . ."

It is an unfortunate document and one can only hope that Pasquerel wrote it on his own; the original in Latin is lost and the style in the surviving German copy does not at all resemble Joan's. It may be that it was drafted and never sent. If Joan was responsible for it she made a tragically ironic payment.

Out of all this mass of gossip only one thing emerges with certainty: the terrific hold she had got over the imagination of her contemporaries. The atmosphere of the court was a good deal cooler. She had her adorers there too, but she had sceptical adversaries and was beginning to have enemies. She was an outsider whose influence over the king threatened the security of the clique which had been running affairs before she came, and her successes did not reconcile them to her ascendancy; quite the contrary, of course. Nor did she make things any easier for herself by her conviction that she must be right through sources of information denied to other people.

It is only fair to remember that she was young, enthusiastic, justly convinced that her divine guide would carry her further than the cautious hesitations of the old fossils at court would ever carry them; but it is not surprising nevertheless that she got their backs up and made them wish that they had never heard of her and her tiresome Voices. Even Regnault de Chartres, Archbishop of Rheims, whose influence was on her side

at the moment because he began to believe that she might, after all, bring him back to his diocese to enjoy its fruits, would take the first opportunity to pay her off when her luck turned, by publishing to the world that she was being punished for her pride and extravagance. Proud she was not, but there is ample evidence that she took a child-like delight in dressing herself up in vermillion or green with cloth of silver or gold, finest Brussels linen and rich furs. One is rather glad that she succumbed to the passion of her age for brilliant clothing, since she had so little time to enjoy them.

If Joan chafed at the delay in setting forth for Rheims, as various chroniclers say she did, and left the king in a huff to camp in the fields, as one of them makes her do, her impatience was scarcely justified by the facts. On June 25th, one week after the battle of Patay, ten or twelve thousand men had been assembled at Gien on the upper Loire—no mean achievement for that time. Probably such despatch would not have been possible had the army been properly equipped, but it had been decided for the sake of mobility to leave the siege train behind and to feed on the country. The lack of funds seems to have been no obstacle to mustering the largest army with which Joan ever served, but it was largely her prestige that attracted the volunteers. Soldiers who had been clamouring for their long arrears of pay declared that they would follow her for nothing, if necessary, and gentlemen who were without the means to buy horses or armour suited to their station came along as common bowmen or troopers on farm horses or whatever other mounts they could find.

Joan rode out with the advance-guard on Monday, the 27th, the Dauphin following with the main army two

days later; since the sovereign was present in person he was of course in supreme command. On the 30th the whole force was reunited before Auxerre, where Joan in her page's suit had heard Mass four months earlier. The town was in the Burgundian obedience and a halt was called to decide what to do next: whether to compel it to capitulate or to go on leaving it in the rear. The first was dangerous owing to loss of time, the second because it would leave a hostile stronghold on the line of communication. Joan advised assault, but Trémoille, who was nominal Captain of Auxerre (if and when it should admit him), did not want his potential property damaged. It is not known whether he was playing his own hand against the king's or not, but it is perhaps significant that his castle at Sully was spared when the English overran the Loire country the previous summer. An agreement was finally arrived at whereby the town promised to surrender if the towns farther on, such as Troyes, Châlons and Rheims, did the same. The bargain was aided (at least so it was believed) by a secret payment to Trémoille; the canny Auxerrois then turned round and got their bribe back by selling provisions to the Dauphin's commissaries.

The next important city was Troyes, forty miles away. It took four days to get there, partly because the troops were constantly scattered in search of food, which was so scarce that they even plucked the grains off the growing wheat, rubbed them between their fingers and ate them raw. On July 3rd there was a formal inspection at Saint Florentin, and on the 4th Joan sent a letter ahead to the "lord burghers of the city of Troyes" calling upon them to surrender to the "Gentle King of France who will soon be in Rheims and Paris," promising them their



lives and properties if they would do so, and assuring them that "we shall soon enter with God's aid into all the cities that belong to this holy realm and make a good strong peace with whoever comes against us." It is curious that she should have been allowed to send such a letter with the king present. Very probably he hoped that her formidable name would induce the town to give in without resistance.

If so, he was quickly undeceived. The inhabitants of Troyes were frightened of the Maid, who had of course been represented to them as an agent of the devil, but they were a good deal more afraid of Philip the Good than of the Evil One himself. They knew only too well what he would do to them later if they surrendered now—what the French had done on a small scale to Jargeau after retaking it from the English. Every city in France sooner or later found itself in the same dilemma, as the fortunes of war ebbed this way and that, and every citizen was provided with two hats, a red for Burgundy, a white for Valois, which he could exchange for the other as the occasion dictated. Moreover the civic leaders of Troyes, both lay and clerical, owed their livings to Anglo-Burgundian favour and the garrison was in Anglo-Burgundian pay.

Joan's summons was therefore refused. Troyes wrote to the neighbouring city of Châlons affirming its own intention of fighting to the death for its true masters and calling upon Châlons to do the same. It was a good document to show to Philip the Good in case of need. Joan was referred to disrespectfully as a "vain boaster" and her letter, "which has neither rhyme nor reason," was stated, untruthfully, to have been thrown into the fire amidst general laughter. When the French advance-

guard appeared the garrison duly made a sortie and was duly driven in. The royal army then camped round in a nominal state of siege while messengers were sent back and forth to discuss terms of surrender.

But the Dauphin's willingness to negotiate was in itself a serious blunder: it revealed to Troyes, as it had revealed to Auxerre, that he was uncertain of himself; his enemies inside the town gained confidence and his own council, never very keen for the enterprise, correspondingly lost it, for the march had been inspired largely by the belief that the towns on the way to Rheims would throw open their gates at the mere sight of the king. Letters came into the city from Châlons and Rheims promising to stand by and bringing news of a fresh English army that was preparing to take the French in the rear. The parleys became deadlocked and the Dauphin's host lay helplessly under the mighty walls, knowing it had not even the means for battering them. So matters stood for four days, from the 5th to the 8th of July.

Meantime the Dauphin had one queer ally inside the town who proved useful in unexpected ways. This was Brother Richard, of the order of the Cordeliers, a prominent member of the legion of fanatics who were running around the country predicting the near coming of the anti-Christ and the end of the world. He had preached in Paris the previous April and so upset the populace that the authorities had thrown him out. In the December before that he had told the people of Troyes to "Sow beans, good people, sow plenty of beans, for what is to come is to come and the hour draws nigh." He was referring to good deeds, but the people, taking his metaphor literally, enthusiastically planted a huge crop

of those mystic vegetables, and the hungry army now had the benefit and a welcome change of diet.

But that was not the most important of Brother Richard's services. The lower classes in Troyes, far more disturbed than their superiors at the presence of the celebrated Maid outside their walls, sent him to settle the controversy as to whether she was from God or the devil. Brother Richard led out a party under a flag of truce, carrying a cross and sprinkling holy water profusely before him; at the sight of Joan he fell on his knees. She stared at him an instant, then called gaily, "Come on, don't be afraid, I shan't fly away"—that being the normal manner of a witch's disappearance when confronted by crucifix and holy water. Richard returned to the town to report that she was genuine and could if she liked transport the whole army, including the horses, over the walls by air. On these grounds he advised instant surrender.

The advice was not taken, and the Dauphin called a council to advise him on what to do next. It turned out to be a council of despair. The Archbishop of Rheims put the sentiment of the meeting when he said that the troops were without food, without pay, without sufficient guns to attack so strong a place; they could not very well go on leaving still another hostile city behind and the conduct of Troyes did not promise a very favourable reception at Châlons and Rheims; it was better, therefore, to call off the whole expedition and return to the safety of the Loire. The majority of those present, who included Alençon, the Bastard, the Counts of Clermont and Vendôme and various of the regular advisers, spoke to the same effect and the coronation march trembled on the edge of cancellation.

But one councillor, Robert le Maçon, Lord of Trèves, spoke up and urged that before a final decision was reached Joan should be summoned. When the king had agreed on the present expedition, Maçon argued, he had not done so through any calculation of men, money and guns, but simply through the exhortation of Joan the Maid, who had promised him that he would be crowned at Rheims and meet little resistance on the way. (There may have been a slight smell of irony in that last phrase.) It would be better, therefore, to see if she had anything useful to add to the deliberations of the assembly before the king made up his mind irrevocably.

Joan was sent for and the archbishop repeated the arguments in favour of a retreat. Without troubling to answer him the girl turned to the Dauphin and asked if he would believe what she told him.

He cautiously responded that he would do so gladly if what she had to say was "profitable and reasonable." Again she put her question and again he answered to the same effect, "Yes, according to what you have to say."

She advanced and said pleadingly, "Gentle King of France, doubt not. If you will remain before this city of Troyes it will be in your obedience within two days, either by force or conciliation."

It was the archbishop, unmindful of his previous snub, who interposed: "Joan, if we were certain to have it in six we should wait. But are you sure?"

She swore that she was. The king and his council, impressed, agreed to give her the chance to prove her words. She hurried off to arrange with the other captains for an assault on the morrow.

All through the night the inhabitants of Troyes watched the preparations from their walls. In the torchlight they saw men running back and forth to concentrate the heavy guns in one spot, cutting faggots for filling the moat, bringing up ladders, shields, missiles of all sorts; they heard the sound of hammering, sawing, shouting, cursing. And in the flickering light they caught occasional glimpses of the Maid on her black courser, a staff in her hand, directing the operations and calling out words of cheer to her tired men. After the somnolent investment of the previous four days it must have looked to the watchers as if an army of demons had been turned loose round them in the night. Toward morning the noises ceased, the torches were extinguished, the French troops caught a snatch of sleep; and the darkness and the silence must have seemed even doubly ominous by contrast with the feverish energy that had gone before.

The spirit of the town was broken. Philip the Good was far away, the Maid, whether divine or infernal, on the spot. The soldiers of the garrison said there was no use in fighting the enchantments of Satan, but the townsfolk had it on excellent authority that as the sun rose a multitude of butterflies were seen to flutter over Joan's banner. The authorities could hold out no longer against the popular fear and wonder: as the guns were about to boom, heralds rode out with the offer of surrender. The Dauphin wisely agreed to lenient terms, and that same day, the 9th, made his royal entry into the town.

The rest of the towns on the route gave up the idea of fighting to the death and followed the example of Troyes. On the 15th Châlons handed over its keys, and

there Joan met a small delegation of her old friends from Domrémy who had come to see her in her glory. Amongst them was her godfather, Jean Morel, to whom she gave a red suit of which he boasted at her Rehabilitation many years later, and Gérardin d'Épinal, aforetime distrusted because of his Burgundian sympathies, to whom she now confided, as he asked her about the future, that she "feared only treason." It is possible that her father and Durand Laxart were also there, for all were going to the coronation and Châlons was on the way. Laxart had the privilege of an audience with the king, who questioned him about his part in Joan's adventure, and Jacques d'Arc was given free entertainment by Rheims: it was the last time he ever saw his daughter.

On the afternoon of Saturday, July 16th, the Dauphin was formally received into Rheims and all that night the carpenters and decorators were busy in the Cathedral preparing for the great ceremony on the morrow. Next morning, the Marshal de Boussac, Gilles de Rais, that day also made a Marshal, the Lord of Graville and Louis de Culan, Admiral of France, rode out, carrying their banners, to the abbey of Saint Denis, where the holy phial brought by an angel to Saint Rémy for the crowning of Clovis was kept, and escorted the abbot back with the precious oil.

The service lasted from nine in the morning till two in the afternoon, and as the Archbishop of Rheims placed the crown on the king's head—a solemn moment in French history, a symbolic act to be compared with the anointing of a Jewish priest-king—the spectators shouted "Noël" and the trumpets sounded so that it seemed, wrote three gentlemen who were present, as if

the great vaulted roof of the edifice must split asunder. The crown itself was a negligible affair, dug out of the treasury of the chapter, since there was no time to wait for a better, and the historic crown of Charlemagne was in possession of the English—an apparently trivial fact that was to have strange consequences for Joan.

The king, as was usual on such occasions, created some new peers and three hundred knights, and was himself knighted by the Duke of Alençon, as the highest in blood of those present. He also gave the customary gifts (rather meagre ones, because of the state of his finances), including a silver vase for the high altar of the Cathedral, which the archbishop promptly appropriated but was forced to restore. After all, it was a small peculation compared to the theft by another bishop of Joan's armour a little later and by a cardinal of a whole army at about the same time.

Next to the king himself the object of general interest and admiration was the girl in armour who had made the coronation possible. In the general distribution of favours she asked only two things for herself, the exemption of her native village from taxes and the privilege of holding her standard at the altar during the ceremony that marked the supreme moment of her life. As Charles completed the resonant syllables of the coronation oath, promising justice to rich and poor alike and the maintenance of Christ's religion, she flung herself on her knees and with tears in her eyes said, "Gentle king, now is the will of God fulfilled, who brought you to Rheims that you might receive your lawful crown and show that you are the true king to whom of right the realm belongs." When her judges, irritated at her presumption, asked her why her standard was displayed rather than those of the

other captains, she answered proudly, "It had been in the turmoil, it had well earned the honour." <sup>1</sup>

The mission laid upon Joan by the archangel in her father's garden had been fulfilled: Orleans was saved, the Dauphin consecrated. Had she gone back to Domrémy then . . . but of course that was impossible. The fever of action was in her blood, new tasks had appeared that called to her for performance. The Duke of Orleans was still to be delivered, the English finally expelled from the realm. With the knowledge she had acquired, the patriotism that her mere name could evoke, both should have been possible to her; yet she lived to carry out neither. Just as nothing she had ever attempted before that Sunday of July 17th had ever failed, so thereafter would nothing succeed. Her star was to descend almost as suddenly as it had risen.

She herself seems to have had a presentiment of the change. Shortly after the coronation she was riding through the country between the Marne and the Oise with the Archbishop of Rheims on one side of her and the Bastard on the other, when they had to pull up because a crowd of people came out to welcome the king with excited demonstrations of loyalty. Deeply moved, Joan said, "Nowhere else have I seen the king greeted with such joy. May it be my fortune, when my time comes, to be buried in this soil."

The archbishop asked curiously, "In what place do you hope to end your days?"

"Where it shall please God," she answered, "I do not know the time or the place any more than you do. But I would that it pleased God my creator that I might

<sup>1</sup> In the French minute, "Il avoit esté à la paine, c'estoit bien raison que il fut à l'honneur." The splendour of the phrase escapes translation.



now lay down my arms and return to serve my father and mother, to look after their flocks with my brother and sister,<sup>1</sup> who would be very happy to see me." There are other hints at that time and henceforth of the same melancholy.

She would have been happier, perhaps, if her wish had been granted. She would even have kept some portion of her immortality, for what she won for France was not again to be lost. But for the sake of her fame, and of humanity's selfish imagination, it is good that she went on to the end of her splendid tragic story: for in failure she was to show herself a finer soldier than in success, and in adversity a far greater human being.

<sup>1</sup> The "sister" is an error of the Bastard's recollection. Others also referred to the dead girl as if she were still alive.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PARIS

THENCEFORTH, until she stands on trial for her life, the heroine becomes and remains a supernumerary. In the five months between Vaucouleurs and Rheims she commanded the action, was its incarnate spirit; during the next ten she is almost without influence on its course. Even her appearances in it are flitting and intermittent. The chroniclers give her an increasingly subordinate place in their recollections; the commissioners of her Rehabilitation, with a pious duty to perform, draw a veil over that dismal period of her career; and though her judges naturally pointed up her failures they merely emphasized the more the incoherent, inconsecutive nature of her story during those ten months preceding her capture.

She followed the army while it existed because there was nothing else for her to do, but her advice was unheeded and her energies starved. Her companions in arms, Alençon, la Hire, Poton de Saintrailles, drifted away into other fields of employment, but she was dragged along to become a disconsolate hanger-on of the court. The tone of her letters shows that she now thought of herself as no longer holding a commission from the king so much as a watching brief from God. Yet she could not count with the same certainty as before

on word from Him, for the Voices—she confessed it to her judges—left her more and more alone at critical moments; presently she even disregarded their commands. It is hard not to see a connection between the neglect of her heavenly inspiration and the chaos of her earthly affairs. She put the one first, we the other. . . .

The reason for her discredit was the change in the royal policy after the coronation. When she arrived at court Charles had no alternatives but to abdicate to his enemies or to attack them: and so long as he remained on the offensive Joan continued to be the God-sent instrument of victory. But with the English defeated, his crown secured and his cities tumbling over each other to offer their submissions, he thought the time ripe to try what diplomacy could do to win back the remainder of his inheritance. Once embarked in that direction he had no further need for the Maid except as a threat in reserve; and since she openly disagreed with his new policy, to the extent even of threatening to run counter to it, he soon came to look on her as more of a liability than an asset.

There was much to be said for Charles, though few of Joan's admirers have been willing to admit it. He doubted whether his treasury would stand the strain of further campaigning, and he would have genuinely preferred to recover his estranged provinces by kindness rather than blood-letting. If he was too slack for prolonged military effort, he was also too easy-going to be vindictive, and he was quite ready to let bygones be bygones with Philip the Good. He knew that Philip regarded the English and was regarded by them with the peculiar loathing that only allies can feel for one

another;<sup>1</sup> he reckoned that the recent improvement in his own fortunes put him in a good bargaining position; and in the light of these two facts he was prepared to believe the Duke when the latter intimated that he was at last coming round to a sense of his feudal duty.

It was there that Charles went wrong. He should have known, after long experience, that it was unsafe to take his cousin of Burgundy's word for anything. Joan, without any experience at all, read the slippery Duke's intentions better than did all the royal advisers. In her simple code the rebellious vassal was an outlaw, whom the king might receive to mercy if he voluntarily laid down his arms but ought never solicit or bribe to do so. With the English she would have refused to treat at all so long as they held an inch of French soil—"the only peace suitable to them is that they go back into their own country, into England." She had a peasant's suspicion of all the politicians' twistings and turnings, and an instinct for essentials which enabled her to see what the professional diplomats overlooked, just as it had enabled her to do what the professional soldiers had considered impossible. She was like the child in the fable who cut across the courtier's hypocritical admiration of the king's imaginary robe with the truthful observation that the king had no clothes on. A year later Charles was forced to admit that she had been right in her distrust of Burgundy's advances, but by that time the harm had been done.

The rift opened on the very day of the coronation.

<sup>1</sup> The French made no attempt to conceal their joy when Scots were killed fighting on their side.

On June 27th Joan had written from Gien summoning Philip to attend at Rheims and there make his obeisance as a dutiful subject. Having no answer from the Duke she wrote again, on July 17th, calling on him to "make a firm peace which shall endure," requiring him humbly to make no more war against the holy realm of France, but to hand over immediately the places and fortresses he held in the said realm, and to take warning that if he sent his men against "the loyal French" they would surely be beaten, "which would be a great pity for the blood of your people spilled. . . ." If he still wanted to fight, let him expend his energies on the Saracens, she suggested. On the same day Charles received with marked cordiality an envoy from the Duke, with whom he signed a truce of fifteen days before leaving Rheims on the 21st, Philip promising to hand over Paris (whose command had been transferred to him by Bedford) at the end of the fifteen days and to go into the question of a separate peace at a conference to be held at Arras the following month.

A week earlier the Duke had renewed his oath of loyalty to Bedford and roused the citizens of Paris to renewed fury against Charles by a dramatic repetition of the story of his father's murder. The respite afforded him by the truce he employed usefully in collecting troops for the defence of the capital he had promised to hand over. During the riotous confusion of the next seven weeks it is restful to turn now and again and contemplate Philip the Good: in a world of cross purposes, with armies marching hither and thither on no conceivable errands under commanders who knew nothing of the enemy's intentions and little more of



PHILIP THE GOOD

*(From the portrait by Roger van der Weyden, Antwerp Museum.)*



their own, he was the one man who knew exactly what he wanted and how to get it.

From Rheims Charles went to the nearby village of Saint Marcoul "to touch for the king's evil"—for the French as well as the English monarchs had a mysterious power to heal scrofula. Thence he proceeded at a leisurely pace to Soissons, which opened its gates without a struggle. From Soissons he sent a demand for the surrender of Compiègne, a city of first importance on the road between Paris and Flanders, but instead of following his demand in person he allowed the negotiations to drag on for five days, then dropped the matter and led his army south. On the 29th he crossed the Marne at Château-Thierry, and seemed to be taking the historic road to Paris favoured by nearly all invaders of France, but instead he continued on to Provins, leaving Paris far to the west. At that point one would have said he was retiring to the Loire; if so, he proved within a few hours that he was not being pig-headed about it.

The cities which had recently submitted to him fell into a panic, believing they were being abandoned to Burgundian retribution. The people of Rheims wrote in alarm to Joan, who answered from Provins on the 5th, to reassure them that she would never desert them, and went on to say:

"It is true that the king has made a truce of fifteen days with the Duke of Burgundy, whereafter he shall peaceably surrender the city of Paris. However do not wonder if I enter there very shortly, since I am not too pleased with these truces and do not know whether I shall keep them or not. If I do it will only be to preserve the honour of the king. For they shall not



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deceive the blood royal, and I shall hold the king's army together in order to be ready at the end of the fifteen days if they do not make peace. . . ."

It is clear that neither she nor her fellow-captains had the least idea of where they were being led, or why.

In the meantime Bedford had collected a force nearly equal in size to the French, about half of it, and that the best half, composed of four thousand fresh troops from England who arrived in Paris on July 25th. The four thousand had been raised at papal expense for a crusade against the Hussites, but the Regent's uncle, Henry Cardinal Beaufort, had obligingly resold them to his nephew for use in France, Bedford pawning his jewels and plate to discharge the debt. With this force he now set out to meet the French.

If he thought that they were making for Paris it was the act of a prudent general to try and intercept them. But when he reached Montereau, in the angle of the Seine and the Yonne, he found that they were off the road to the capital and heading steadily away from it. One would have thought that if Charles was returning to the Loire to disband his army, the Regent would have given him every facility for doing so. Instead he blocked his passage over the Seine by seizing the bridge at Bray. If Bedford wanted to force a battle he was going the right way about it, but he was shortly to prove that he wanted a fight even less than did his adversary.

This was on the 2nd of August. The French came up, made a languid demonstration against the small English force on the bridge and fell back without further effort on Provins. Two days later they started north again,

to the delight of Joan and the younger captains, such as Vendôme, Clermont, Laval and Duke René,<sup>1</sup> who hoped that at last they were to be led against Paris. Their joy was premature: at Coulommiers the king once again veered away from the capital and on the 7th was back in Château-Thierry. For all the sense his movements made he might have been going back to Rheims to be crowned a second time.

Perhaps Bedford was too bewildered to move; he may have felt like the spectators of the Duke of York's famous march up hill and down again. At any rate he sat on at Montereau, making no attempt either to follow Charles or to get between him and Paris. When the French had again left the capital safely behind, the Regent bestirred himself to write an insulting letter challenging "Charles of Valois who call yourself, without right, king" to stand and fight in any place convenient to both of them. Bedford certainly sounded in earnest and his language was most injurious. He taunted Charles, somewhat unjustly, with the murder of John the Fearless and for all the evils and bloodshed that were caused by his persistence in a war against the lawful title of Henry VI; but first and foremost he blamed him for "seducing the minds of the ignorant, in making use of superstitious and damned people, such as a weak-minded and dissolute woman in man's clothes and a mendicant friar, apostate and seditious, both, as we are informed, according to Holy Scripture, abominable to God."

The friar referred to was Brother Richard, who had

<sup>1</sup> René had come out openly for his brother-in-law Charles VII—and against his future son-in-law, little Henry VI—at the time of the coronation.

attached himself to the army after Troyes; the Regent's opinion of Joan remained unchanged and four years later, in reporting to the Council on the misfortunes of the English after her arrival, he blamed them largely on "that disciple and limb of a fiend called Pucelle."

The letter reached Charles on the 11th at Crépy-en-Valois and so stung him that he wheeled abruptly southwest to Lagny-le-sec to take up the challenge. "You can find me without trouble; it's rather I who am looking for you," he wrote to Bedford, forgetting whose back it was that had been turned. The Regent, without undue haste, followed his letter north and camped at Mitry, south of Daumartin-en-Goële, within sight of the hills round Paris. The king sent la Hire out to reconnoitre; the Gascon returned to report that the English were in their usual semi-fortified position and too strong to be attacked. Charles suggested to Bedford that he come out, but the Englishman naturally preferred to fight where he was. The French sniffed and turned north once more. The Regent first fell back nearer Paris, then decided to follow lest the enemy take Compiègne and not only cut off the road to Flanders but open a road for themselves into Normandy.

The two armies were in sight of each other again on the 14th, when a French detachment under Jean de Saintrailles, a brother of Poton, caught the English waist deep in water while fording a tiny tributary of the Oise called la Nonnette. The king could not come up in time, however, to take advantage of his luck, and Bedford was able to select a position in front of Senlis before night fell. The French deployed two and a half miles away with their backs to the town of Montépilloy.

The next day was Sunday and the French, after an early Mass, moved forward to within striking distance. They formed up in three lines or "battles," seventy-five yards apart, the first under Alençon and Vendôme, the second under Duke René, the third or reserve under the two marshals, Boussac de Saint Sévère and Gilles de Rais. A special mobile force or mass of manoeuvre was set aside under Joan, the Bastard, la Hire and d'Albret, Trémoille's half-brother—a name more famous in French military annals as that of the late commander-in-chief at Agincourt.

The English, in two lines, had their rear protected by the Nonnette and their flank by moats dug overnight. Charles, justifiably reluctant to repeat the suicidal charges that had ruined his predecessors, felt out the enemy's position, decided that it was impregnable, and challenged Bedford again to come out in the open; Bedford again put prudence first and declined. Joan went up to the English rampart and touched it with the point of her lance but the English did not stir, trusting that the Gallic temper would give way first, as it had so often in the past. The Picards and the Scots finally taunted one another into a bloody brawl outside the English position and raised such a dust that no one could distinguish one side from the other; when visibility had been restored it was found that three hundred had been killed, more than in many formal engagements. But activity in other parts of the field was limited to the lightest of skirmishing. Trémoille, reassured by the quiet, ventured forward to lend his presence at one of the skirmishes, fell off his horse and was with difficulty hoisted on again by his pages; he then retired.

At dusk the French withdrew and the next day fell back on Crépy, hoping that Bedford would follow. But the Regent suddenly turned about, abandoned the whole of the Oise region and hurried off to succour Evreux in Normandy, which was being threatened by some independent French bands. He had been very earnest about covering Paris when it was not threatened; when it finally was he left it to take care of itself. But Normandy was his first concern and he had cunningly made Paris Philip the Good's—if his strategy was bewildering, his diplomacy was brilliantly successful.

Senlis promptly surrendered to Charles and was taken over by a French garrison. Compiègne followed suit immediately and its keys were delivered on the 17th. Trémoille claimed the captaincy—these sinecures were amongst the most desirable favours a sovereign could grant, and the fat Chamberlain had more than his fair share of them—but Guillaume de Flavy, captain at the time of the surrender, was left in active command at the request of the inhabitants; a lucky decision for the king, a fatal one (according to some) for Joan. Beauvais sent in its submission shortly thereafter and the property of its bishop and count, Pierre Cauchon, the most important figure in Joan's life—and death—was sequestered by the king's officers.

Charles entered Compiègne on the 18th, and there he lingered while Joan, frantic at the thought of inaction while the road to Paris lay open, pressed him unceasingly to claim his capital as she had pressed him two months earlier to claim his crown. But the king, involved in one of the most singular pieces of diplomacy on record, turned a deaf ear. In despair she called upon

her unfailing sympathizer, Alençon, to go on without him: "My pretty Duke, get your men and the other captains ready, I am going to see Paris closer than I have yet." Her one glimpse so far had been of the hill of Montmarte while confronting Bedford at Daumartin.

The Duke as always was willing and the king not grieved to be rid of them. Various of the chieftains were already off on independent expeditions, including la Hire and Poton de Saintrailles, who had ridden away to assist Richemont in the task of harassing Normandy; the former of the two devoted, hard-riding Gascons Joan was never to see again. But the Paris enterprise was on a different plane from a series of cavalry raids: high policy was involved as well as feats of arms, and the Duke and the Maid were only allowed to go with as many men as were willing to follow them, on condition that they did nothing of importance till the king came up. They might call on Paris to surrender, and that was about all.

The two left Compiègne with their followers on August 23rd and entered the village of Saint Denis, five miles to the south of the capital, without hindrance on the 26th. During the next few days they went out several times to reconnoitre, while their men, scattered on foraging parties, collided now and then with bands from the city out on the same errand. Alençon wrote a friendly letter to the provost and the aldermen of Paris, addressing them personally by name, but they retorted with the curt message that he was wasting his paper. Nothing further could be done until the king arrived with the full strength of the army, and the young Duke departed to hurry him up.

But Charles refused to be hurried. Alençon found him at Senlis rubbing his hands over an arrangement he had come to with Philip the Good which he fondly believed would deliver Paris to him without the necessity of siege or assault. On August 28th at Compiègne he had signed a truce (previously negotiated between his representatives and Burgundy's at Arras) providing for a suspension of hostilities between himself and his vassal in all the country to the east of the Seine from Nogent to Harfleur, with two reservations: (1) Cities or fortresses holding passages over a river and (2) Paris, which Charles might attack and Philip defend. The truce was to run till Christmas, and was later extended to the following Easter.

The terms were so ludicrously one-sided that the king must have seen advantages not visible to our eyes or, for that matter, those of the majority of his contemporaries. The principal towns of Picardy, such as Amiens, Abbeville and Saint Quentin, were guaranteed to Philip, though on the admission of his own paid chronicler they and others were eager to submit to the king. The right to force the bridges was no particular concession, for without that right the royal army would have been cooped up for ever in the network of rivers amongst which it lay. Charles scarcely needed Philip's permission to attack Paris, for part of his army lay in front of it at the moment he signed the truce, while, by recognizing Philip's jurisdiction over the city, he as good as put it on its mettle to defend itself: the Parisians might have thrown over the English in favour of the Valois king, they were much less likely to rise against a Duke of Burgundy who was also a Frenchman. Yet a free surrender of Paris from within must have been the compensation Charles expected when

he agreed not to molest Philip while Philip's English allies might molest him as they pleased and even help Philip to defend Paris against him. It was in the expectation of such a surrender that Charles took his time getting to his capital and threatened it with a fist conspicuously gloved when he got there.

He was about seven weeks too late. Had he appeared before Paris in July, when opinion was torn owing to the feud between Bedford and Burgundy, with the civil authorities uncertain of which way to jump and the defences feeble because it was no one's business to look after them, the gates might have swung open in response to a resolute knock. But the Regent and Philip, reconciled with each other and respited by Charles, had been given time to augment the garrison, while public opinion had responded to treatment from Burgundy's hand-picked magistrates. Those gentlemen, expecting little mercy from the king after their long record of outrage against his supporters, artfully depicted Charles as a monster who had threatened to level Paris and plough its site into the ground; as for Joan—"a creature in the form of a woman . . . what she really is God knows"—it appeared that she had promised to put every man, woman and child in Paris to the sword. So when Alençon made his friendly overture it was not hard to convince the Parisians that it was a malicious ruse to weaken by dividing them. On September 1st, somewhat late but with enthusiasm, they set to work to strengthen their defences in preparation for a stout resistance.

The king arrived at Saint Denis on the 7th. In complete ignorance of Philip's trickery he still hoped for a rousing welcome from the capital after it got over its



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first shyness of him. But the captains were dubious: the work on the fortifications looked as if the city would want some coaxing, so that evening the king agreed to test its sentiment by a flourish of arms—nothing more—under the walls next day. Of all possible alternatives that was of course the worst, to arouse the Parisians to fighting mood and then show them they had nothing much to be afraid of. During the night the troops were moved forward three miles to the village of La Chapelle.

The point chosen for the demonstration was the Saint Honoré Gate, where the Comédie Française now stands. A more unsuitable could not have been found. The strongest part of the capital's defences was on the north, where a line of massive walls and fortifications extended from the west end of the Louvre to the Porte Saint Denis; a deep moat watered their base, and beyond lay another, quite deep but dry and somewhat narrower. The vulnerable spot was on the south, near what was then and is now the university quarter, and the king held a bridge upstream which would have enabled him to cross the Seine without difficulty. But since the attack was not meant seriously it did not matter perhaps which point was chosen, except to the unfortunate troops. The most elementary preparations were dispensed with and by noon of the 8th the action was already in full swing.

The day was the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady and the Parisians were in church when they heard the first sound of the guns. They later professed to be scandalized at the desecration of the holiday, and so did Joan's judges, but that was merely an outbreak of the righteousness common to all belligerents in all ages;

the practice was common enough and Bedford had previously challenged Charles to fight on the Feast of the Ascension. The horror of the citizens did not keep them from tumbling quickly out of the churches, forming up under their leaders and hurrying to join the garrison on the walls. The besiegers could see the swift criss-cross movement of many banners and in a few moments were vigorously dodging missiles and exchanging insults.

After several hours of battering, the gate began to show signs of giving way. And at that instant the battle took a new turn not foreseen in the king's plan. Joan put herself at the head of a column of assault and moved forward to cross the moat. Gilles de Rais and old Gaucourt were with her, while Alençon and Clermont lay in reserve behind the knoll of Saint Roch to spring forward when she should have driven in the defenders clustered round the damaged gate. As at Saint Loup, an empty demonstration was to be converted into a genuine attack on the initiative of the Maid. There was no question of Voices now, and she knew she was acting in sheer defiance of the king's will: when asked by her judges if her Counsel had directed her before Paris she answered, "No, I went at the request of the gentlemen who wanted to make a skirmish or valiance of arms: but I had the intention of going farther and crossing the moats."

Through a storm of arrows she led her men into the first or dry moat, apparently having to fight her way against a retreating party of defenders, for she broke her sword—not that of Fierbois—and snatched up another which had been thrown away. She scrambled up the high ridge separating the two moats, took her

standard from its bearer and called on the city to "surrender in the name of the King of France." The men on the walls answered with abuse and a shower of stones. She shouted back that she would be in to see them shortly, coolly borrowed a lance and sounded the depth of the scummy water in front of her. And then she learned what adequate preparation would have discovered earlier, that the moat was too deep to wade through. The fault was not hers—this was the first chance she had had to approach the walls so close.

But she had no thought of giving up. She sent for materials to raise a ford through the water and herself lent a hand in carrying the bundles of faggots when the working party came up. It was not enough: what was required were the leather boats, carried on mules' backs, that were then in use for crossing large moats, but no one had thought to bring them along. Nevertheless she stayed where she was while fresh material, every sort of object that could be thrown into a ditch, was hurried forward, and from her exposed eminence on the ridge covered the work by a steady exchange of fire with the defenders. She knew that it was essential to force a passage that night, for no one could be certain of what the king would order on the morrow; the people on the walls, fearful of a night attack, were equally anxious to drive her off quickly and intensified their fire as the day waned. Shortly before sundown a crossbow found its mark and Joan fell with an arrow embedded in her thigh.

And even yet she was not through. Her standard-bearer was wounded and withdrew, but she lay down in pain on the sheltered side of the ridge and exhorted her tired men to another attempt. They obeyed, and

even managed at last to cross the moat, but they had no spirit left for an assault on those towering walls. The trumpets sounded the end of the action, and the men retired without pausing to collect their stores. Joan, by Gaucourt's order, was placed on a horse and carried off protesting and pleading that "the place could have been taken."

It probably could, despite the lack of preliminary preparation, had she been properly supported; "if things had been well conducted, there was a great likelihood that they would have turned out according to her will," wrote a Burgundian chronicler who was within the walls and anything but partial to the Maid. The reserve under Alençon had lain idle throughout the day, and the bulk of the army, at La Chapelle, never came into the picture at all. If reinforcements had been thrown in at the moment Joan was wounded, if the attack had been pushed energetically after dark, all the advantage would have been with the king. He had thousands of fresh men in reserve, while an assault under cover of darkness would have favoured him as much as it would have terrified the exhausted defenders. An artillery preparation such as that at Jargeau, a series of hammer blows like those on the Tourelles—but Charles was no more capable of conceiving war on those terms than Joan would have been able to perambulate aimlessly for six weeks across the landscape with 12,000 fighting men at her back. She had brought Charles to the very walls of the capital he had never yet entered as king; he had refused the chance she opened to him, and six years were to pass, packed with much needless misery for French and English alike, before Richemont gave him another.

Joan and Alençon begged to renew the assault next day, but the king peremptorily ordered them back to Saint Denis. They urged that he should work round to the south of Paris and probe at its weak spot, but he ruled that matter out of consideration by ordering the bridge he had built over the Seine to be destroyed. On the 13th he began a retreat to the Loire by way of Lagny and Bray; the armistice with Burgundy had left him almost nowhere else to go. On the 18th the truce was amended to acknowledge Philip's jurisdiction over Paris, and on the 21st the army of the coronation march was disbanded at Gien. What had started as a decisive campaign had been turned in three months into a kind of royal summer progress.

Joan said at her trial that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret visited her at Saint Denis before the departure and told her to remain there, but the voice of common sense prevailed over their command and the prompting of her own desire. The two saints so comforted her, however, despite the disobedience, that her wound was healed in five days. As a token of her gratitude she left her armour, given her at Tours, in the famous abbey of the kings of France, where so many other soldiers had performed a similar rite of thanksgiving. Hers was not to remain there long, for Louis of Luxembourg, Bishop of Thérouanne and Chancellor to Henry VI in France, removed and sold it, to the loud disgust of the monks of the abbey, who made a good deal of money out of such relics.

Before leaving Gien she took her final farewell of "her pretty duke." Alençon was going into Normandy, in the footsteps of la Hire and Poton de Saintrailles, to try to recover his estates by force from the English. He

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begged to be allowed to take Joan with him, but the king refused: he might still use her, and felt safer with her under his own eye than upsetting his diplomatic apple-cart elsewhere. So she rode after him, a sad little figure, to twiddle her thumbs in his castle at Selles-en-Berri.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CAPTURE

DURING the next six weeks Joan repeated her itinerary of four months earlier, with the difference that whereas in the spring she dashed from town to town on her courser at the head of her troops, in the autumn she ambled on her pony in the wake of the court. After two somnolent weeks at Selles the king returned to his old capital at Bourges, where the queen, Marie of Anjou, presently came to join him. Joan conceived the same unreasoning adoration for the plain little daughter of the indomitable Yolanda as for her even plainer, and churlishly neglectful, consort. She was to tell her judges that she would do more for her queen than for any other woman on earth: like all highly imaginative people, she could not help investing the person with the glamour of the office. It was lucky for Charles VII that she was able to.

In that period of leisure she saw more of women in general than at any other time in her active career. Of one she made a friend, with another she had a squabble. The friend was Marguerite la Touralde, wife of the Receiver-General of the Royal Finances, at whose house in Bourges she lodged for three weeks. There was twenty years difference in their ages, but they slept in the same bed, gossiped together, and accompanied each other to church daily and to the other great social institution of the age,

the public baths. Years later Marguerite was to make her own embellishments upon her young friend's legend. In her account of Joan's interview with the Duke of Lorraine she has the girl say to His Grace that if he really wanted to recover his health the best way of going about it would be to discard his mistress and take back his wife. Each person fashioned a Joan according to his or her own ideal, and the respectable housewife of Bourges was thus able through the Maid to strike a blow for the sanctity of the home.

The squabble was with a matron named Catherine de la Rochelle, who turned up at Jargeau on a rival mission. Catherine's goal was also the salvation of France, but her formula differed from Joan's in several important respects. It had been imparted to her by a white lady dressed all in cloth-of-gold who appeared to her at night, and required no other subsidy from the king than a few heralds with trumpets. Duly supplied with these, Catherine proposed to make a tour of the cities of France; at her entry into each the heralds were to convoke the citizens by a blast on their trumpets; and thereafter Catherine was to explain to the assembled multitude that all who had hidden stocks of gold, silver or other treasures were to hand them over for the king forthwith. Evasion would be impossible, since the white lady would reveal to the eye of her disciple any secret hoards, which would thereupon be confiscated and the delinquents handed over to justice.

Aware perhaps that she was trespassing on another's preserves, Catherine approached Joan for an endorsement of her project before submitting it to the king, adding as a bait the promise to allocate the funds collected to Joan's future military activities.



Joan might not have been capable of a critical analysis of the economics of the proposal, but she was able to put her finger on several practical objections. She herself was at the moment engaged in soliciting subscriptions from the towns for an autumn campaign on the Loire: to go further and impose a sweeping capital levy was the surest way of exciting an already overtaxed population to rebellion. As a French peasant she would also have shared her countrymen's aversion to revealing their private wealth to probing eyes, whether official or occult. Nor did she see what Catherine, a married woman, had to do with esoteric revelations.

Somewhat ungraciously, Joan advised her petitioner to go back to her husband and look after her house and children. Then her conscience smote her—after all, she might be wronging the woman; she herself knew what it was to be rebuffed by sceptics. She consulted her own counsel, and Saints Catherine and Margaret confirmed her impression that "the woman was a fool and her scheme nonsense." The Maid then felt safe in making an adverse report to the king.

But Catherine had her own share of pertinacity; she invited the critic to come and see the white lady for herself. Joan, still anxious to be fair, accepted on the assurance that the nocturnal visitor turned up every night. Accordingly the two lay down together in Catherine's bed, Joan awake while her hostess slept, but when nothing happened by midnight she too fell asleep. Next morning she asked Catherine if the white lady had come. Catherine said yes, and it was a pity that Joan had dozed off at the wrong moment. Determined to see the thing through, Joan slept all the next day and returned in the evening for a more sustained vigil. The

result was no better; all through the night she kept asking Catherine if she was certain the white lady would come, and Catherine kept answering encouragingly, "Yes; soon," but morning dawned without a sight of her and Joan gave it up for good.

Perhaps Catherine would have had no better luck had she stayed up to see Joan's saints—though of course she would not have been offered the chance. The judges at Rouen, on the trail of the "sign" Joan had shown the king at Chinon, asked her why she would not reveal it to them since she had asked for Catherine's to be shown to her. Joan retorted, somewhat disingenuously, that had Catherine's been previously shown to as many distinguished people as had her own, she would not have made a point of seeing it. In any event, she added with superb indifference to consistency, she had been informed by her own revelations that there could not possibly be anything in Catherine's. It does look a bit as if she had made up her mind beforehand not to give the white lady the benefit of the doubt.

Brother Richard, who had taken Catherine under his wing,<sup>1</sup> added his voice to hers in loud and bitter reproach of Joan when the king turned the scheme down. Nevertheless relations between the two rivals were not entirely broken off. Catherine was always coming along with new ideas, and Joan had too much time on her hands. Catherine's next inspiration was to call upon the Duke

<sup>1</sup> Brother Richard had several other disciples like Catherine who followed him from place to place. Anatole France puts Joan in that "flying squadron," and says that Brother Richard coached her. It is an astonishing theory, in view of the fact that she had never met the man until most of her work was done, had no communication with him till some time before her capture and quarrelled with him in between.

of Burgundy in person and induce him to lay down his arms; Joan, with rather more experience of Philip the Good, told her she would be wasting her breath: the duke would make peace "at the point of the lance and not otherwise." Shortly afterward, when the army was ready to depart for La Charité, Catherine considered going along, then thought better of it and tried to dissuade Joan, saying it would be too cold. She happened to be right.

She happened also, unluckily, to have the last word. Sometime during the next year she was either taken by the enemy or turned her coat in hope of a more cordial reception from the other side. After Joan's capture she was called upon to testify about her relations with the Maid before an official in Paris. She did so with a will, repeating various bits of sinister gossip which she had heard, and issuing the spiteful warning that "the said Joan would escape from prison with the devil's help unless she were very sternly confined." Joan paid for that bit of spite.

Meantime, after much debate, the royal council had decided to undertake a short autumn campaign against two towns, La Charité and Saint Pierre-le-Moustier, which had been left on the upper Loire before the departure for Rheims. Joan argued in favour of a return to the Île de France which, as the very heart of the kingdom, was the natural objective if the realm were to be recovered quickly and entirely, but Charles doubted the advisability of so elaborate an expedition so late in the season, even if he had felt able to meet the cost of it. As it was the loyal cities had to be laid under contribution for the small army that was actually raised. Joan's name was still worth something, evidently, since

the king made use of it in the appeals for funds, and the towns when responding stated plainly that their contributions were intended for her service; one at least sent her a personal present of arms. Charles d'Albret, Tremoille's half-brother, was put in charge of the expedition, since he was royal lieutenant for Berri, the country to be invaded, but she was named joint commander and so referred to by d'Albret in his proclamations.

Early in November the expedition left Bourges for Saint Pierre-le-Moustier, a little town situated on the River Allier slightly above its junction with the Loire. Several days were spent idly waiting for a surrender, but when the garrison proved obstinate the commanders decided upon an assault.

The old story was repeated. The storming-party dashed forward, ran into a stubborn resistance and were repulsed. Joan tried in vain to rally them, then, with only half a dozen men about her, continued the attack in order to give the rest a chance to re-form and return. Her aide d'Aulon, who had been wounded in the heel by an arrow and was unable to stand, called upon her to retreat in God's name, since she was practically alone and in extreme danger. She took off her light helmet, looked coolly about her, and said, "I am not alone, for I see fifty thousand men at my side, and I won't retire till I have taken the town." Turning to the others she called for materials to bridge the moat. The old magic worked: the soldiers, reheartened, came up once more with the faggots and timbers, the moat was forced, and the enemy gave way before the determined persistence of superior force. A few hours later Joan showed again how great was her authority over the common soldier

when she made them restore the valuables they had pillaged from the church. It was like asking them to return their pay.

D'Aulon, of course, reports the episode as a miracle. "She said she had fifty thousand," he declared in amazement, "when I saw there were only four or five. . . ." The miracle is his, not Joan's. Whatever illusions she may have had, they were never of that sort. Probably the Bastard would have understood better what she meant by her bit of hyperbole: in concluding his testimony at the Rehabilitation he said, "I want to add that Joan might sometimes speak jokingly in matters of war, and in order to give heart to the soldiers predicted things that did not happen. But I declare that when she spoke seriously of her mission she limited herself to saying that she was sent to raise the siege of Orleans, to help the poor people oppressed therein and elsewhere, to lead the king to his coronation." When she announced to the discomfited troops that she had fifty thousand about her she did not expect them to take her literally; she was referring to the hosts of Heaven who were on her side—and, believing her, they acted accordingly.

The attack on La Charité, though a more elaborate enterprise, was a complete disaster. Various captains went to assist Joan and d'Albret, and guns were sent from Orleans and elsewhere, but it appears, on somewhat slight evidence, that neither sufficient supplies nor money were provided by the royal treasury. The town, under the captaincy of Perrinet Gressart, ex-mason's apprentice and bandit of talent, put up a vigorous resistance, while the fearful cold—against which Catherine de la Rochelle had issued warning—at length broke down the morale of the troops. No details of the siege

are revealed, not even its exact duration, and all that we know of Joan's part in it was drawn from her by her judges. She admitted that she led an assault which broke down, denied trying to help it along by sprinkling holy water in the moat, and exculpated her Counsel from any part in the failure by saying she had gone at the request of the other captains when she would have preferred to go into the Île de France. It is interesting to notice how she substitutes "other captains" for "king" here as at Paris—in both cases she is obviously trying to divert responsibilities for things going wrong from her sovereign as from her God.

Her story during the four winter months of 1429-30 is almost a blank. The Clerk of Paris says that she was reconciled to Brother Richard on Christmas Day at Jargeau and received the sacrament from him thrice; but the Burgundian chronicler had a motive in linking her with the detested friar. On December 29th the king, in the presence of various distinguished members of the court, signed a patent ennobling "his dearly beloved and most celebrated servant, the Maid," and all her family, both in the male and female line for ever. The family name is given in the patent as d'Ay; henceforth it was to be Lys until the line was extinguished later in the century. The youngest brother Pierre lived to succeed to Robert de Baudricourt's captaincy in Vaucouleurs.

For the rest of the winter there is nothing: it is impossible even to tell where Joan was except for the dating of an occasional letter or a casual entry in an account-book.

The end of March saw her at Sully, Tremoille's castle on the Loire, waiting for the plans for the spring operations

to be announced. Reports came in of vast preparations by the English for renewing the offensive; some of them were true, and Henry VI was being brought over the Channel to undo as far as possible the moral damage of the coronation at Rheims. The Duke of Burgundy shuffled out of renewing the truce with France, a fact which could have only one interpretation. Yet Charles was sunk into the same lethargy out of which Joan's coming had temporarily jolted him just a year earlier. Such apathy in the face of all that had to be done is so extraordinary that one instinctively looks for explanations, for extenuating circumstances, but in that year of 1430 there seems to be none: whatever fighting was done for him was carried on by independent bands, like la Hire's and Richemont's—and like that which Joan, unable to contain herself longer, was now preparing to organize.

She left Sully after the 28th of March and before the 15th of April; neither the exact date, the number of her followers, nor her destination are known. The earliest and in many ways the best of her chroniclers, Alençon's retainer de Cagny, says that:

“The Maid, who had seen and heard the manner and plans of the king and council for the recovery of the realm, was very ill-content, and found means of slipping away without taking leave of the king . . . to the city of Lagny on the Marne, because these in that place were making good war against the English in Paris. . . .”

But she probably did not ride straight to Lagny, for she was in Melun in Easter week, from the 17th to the 23rd of April, and Melun is on the direct road from Sully to Lagny, hence she in all probability stopped there first.

Nor is it likely that there was a complete rupture between her and the king, for when she was captured she had a substantial sum of his money with her to pay her followers. On the other hand, she was taken fighting in defence of Compiègne, which Charles had formally returned to Philip the Good—but the obedience expected of the chief of a roving band in those days was highly flexible and capricious.

At Melun she had a success and a first warning of disaster. The town had been under Anglo-Burgundian rule for ten years, but at the Maid's appearance the citizens rose, threw out the garrison and declared for Charles VII. It was a personal triumph for Joan, since she had no army with her, nothing but her few loyal followers. Apparently the garrison did not depart from the vicinity without a struggle, for Joan mentions at her trial being "in the moats of Melun" where there was no reason for her to go except to fight. And it was there that Saints Catherine and Margaret told her of her fate, or so much of it as they chose to reveal at the moment: "You will be captured before the day of Saint John (June 24th), for so it is decreed. Be not amazed, take what befalls in good part and God will sustain you."

Then, or more likely after she had recovered from her first shock (for the warning was repeated), she asked when she would be taken, and prayed that she should be allowed to die without suffering "long agony of imprisonment." The Voices merely repeated the injunction to take what came in good part, since so it was decreed, but they would not enlighten her on the time or place. The presentiment that her career was to be short—the "year and a little more"—had at last taken definite shape. It no more entered her head to go back



than it did to doubt her Voices when they told her that imprisonment and death lay just over the horizon.

Her judges asked whether she would have gone to the scene of her capture if the Voices had forewarned her of the time and place. She answered that she would not have done so voluntarily, but that she would have obeyed their commandment to the end whatever lay in store for her. Her sense of duty was on the heroic scale, but she had a thoroughly healthy aversion to martyrdom.

From Melun she went to Lagny, where she joined up with two old friends, Ambrose de Loré, who was captain of the place, and Poton de Saintrailles, and picked up two new followers, Hugh Kennedy, a Scot, and Bartelemy Baretta, a Lombard free-lance. Shortly after her arrival in the town she learned that a Burgundian freebooter, Franquet d'Arras, was ravaging the right bank of the Marne with a band of four hundred men. Collecting a similar number she rode out to look for him and caught him returning from a particularly successful looting expedition, so encumbered with booty that he had had to commandeer a train of farm wagons to carry it. On catching sight of Joan he promptly took up Fastolf's position at Rouvray, with the wagons to cover his front and flanks. But Joan was not Clermont. Instead of rushing crazily in, she sent back to Lagny for reinforcements and poured a steady fire from three sides till they came up, with the result that when the assault was made it was carried through to success with the minimum of loss.

Franquet was captured by one of her followers and therefore by custom handed over to her; she was soon to become a similar piece of negotiable property. The magistrates of Senlis at once put in a claim for him, as

a common criminal subject to civil justice. She at first refused, since she hoped to exchange him for one of Charles VII's agents in Paris, "the landlord of the Bear Inn," captured in an abortive Armagnac uprising that same month. But the man died in the Bastille, and when Joan heard of it she handed Franquet over gratis to the magistrates, who executed him after a trial of a fortnight in the course of which he confessed himself a "murderer, highwayman and traitor." That transaction was to give rise to one of the most ironical charges brought against her at her trial.

While she was at Lagny she innocently added another count to the long indictment accumulating against her. A three-days-old baby died before baptism and was brought by its parents to the Church of Saint Peter in the hope that the Mother of God would restore it to life for at least long enough to allow it to enter the community of Christian souls. The girls of the city came to see Joan and asked her to join them in prayer for the infant's resuscitation. She went with them to the church and found the child "as black as the tunic" she was wearing when she described the episode at her trial. The young women knelt together before the altar and prayed—and soon it was seen that the baby yawned and its colour began to return. A priest at once administered the sacrament of baptism, yet barely in time: presently the child again ceased to breathe, and for ever. But the purpose of the intercession had been accomplished, for the child could be buried in consecrated ground.

"Did not the people of the city say that you had brought about this resurrection by your prayer?" demanded the judges, severely.

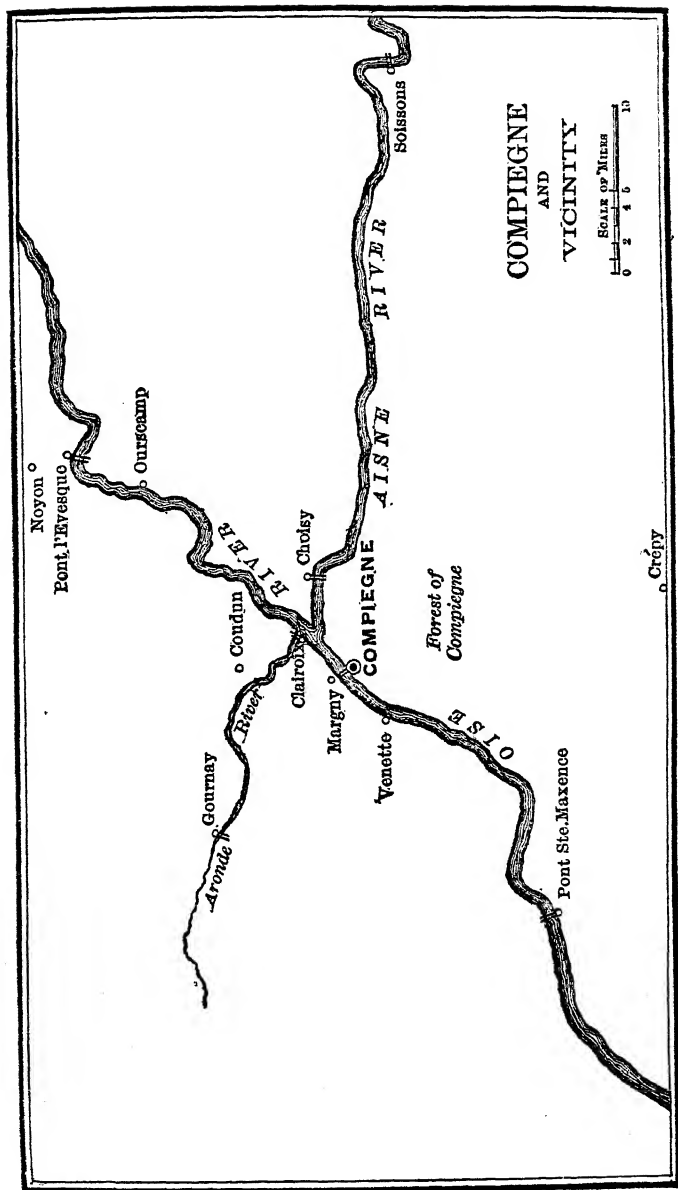
"I didn't ask," came the quiet answer.

The judges could not be expected to diagnose a convulsion, but if they had taxed their memories in the prisoner's behalf they could have found plenty of precedents for the miracle. Their own contemporary, Colette, had raised a sister nun from death after three days so that the woman might confess before she was buried; and some of them had a hand in Colette's canonization.

What else Joan did at Lagny and how long she remained there is altogether unknown. Probably she did some raiding, for she mentions having picked up a Burgundian sword, "good for giving blows and buffets," which she carried thenceforth so long as she was under arms—the sword of Fierbois was not taken with her, and she refused to say what she had done with it. It was while she was at Lagny that she learned that the Duke of Burgundy was advancing to the siege of Compiègne, and from that time the mist that hangs over her movements during so many months suddenly clears away. Gathering her followers, including Poton, Kennedy and Baretta, she hurried north to the defence of the threatened city.

Its loss the previous summer had been a severe blow to Philip the Good, for with it he lost command of the road from Paris into Picardy. Determined to have it back by hook or crook, he first tried the second of the two, but when the place failed to abandon Charles even at Charles' own order, the duke was compelled to resort to the other expedient. Its importance to him can be measured by the fact that nearly the whole of his military effort during the year 1430 was concentrated on its recovery.





Compiègne, on the east bank of the Oise (the river runs from north-east to south-west at that point), was one of the most strongly fortified towns in the kingdom. It was about the size of Orleans and its defences were even more imposing. Three thousand yards of massive wall surrounded it, broken by many towers at irregular intervals, forty-four on the river-side alone. To the south and east was a thick forest, and across the river a marshy plain rising gently to the bluffs of Margny, which abruptly closed the horizon of Picardy. Over the deep, rapid waters of the Oise was a thirteenth-century wooden bridge, with houses along two-thirds of its length, and at the far end an independent redoubt, with outworks, drawbridge and portcullis.

When Joan arrived on May 14th, the Burgundian army, led by the duke in person, had already established itself in Noyon, seized the bridge over the Oise at Pont l'Evêque, fifteen miles upstream, and was attacking the little town of Choisy-au-bac, on the north bank of the Aisne five miles above its confluence with the Oise. It was Philip's plan to encircle Compiègne by throwing part of his force into the plain across the river to the west, part into the narrow strip between the city and the forest. The capture of Choisy was essential to the second half of this design, for the place commanded the only road between Noyon and Compiègne on the east bank of the Oise. The larger town had in consequence sent help to the smaller in the form of a detachment of troops and a huge gun, under Louis de Flavy, brother of William, the captain of Compiègne.

The situation was explained to Joan on the 15th, and she instantly resolved on a feat of arms worthy of a Montrose or a du Guesclin. Under cover of darkness she

crossed the Oise with fifteen hundred men and marched swiftly north on Pont l'Evêque. A few hours later Poton de Saintrailles galloped east, crossed the Aisne by the first available bridge, and turned west again in the direction of Choisy. It was her plan to attack the eight hundred English guarding the bridge at Pont l'Evêque while Poton fell on the rear of the Burgundian force before Choisy: the latter, cut off from help through Joan's activities in between them and their base, could be destroyed by Poton at his leisure and the siege of Choisy raised.

It was a masterly conception and deserved better luck. "Between dawn and sunrise" the Maid wiped out the camp at Pont l'Evêque before the enemy's main force at Noyon could be awakened and rushed to the rescue. But Poton, though he moved with the same ghostly speed, arrived just too late to complete the exploit, for Choisy had surrendered a few hours earlier. The furious Gascon had his revenge on those of the Burgundians who had not yet entered the town and then rode away.

Joan, utterly tireless, promptly devised another scheme for troubling the enemy; if she could not halt his advance she could still, with her swift-riding veterans, strike him in the rear. The nearest bridge over the Aisne, now that Choisy had fallen, was Soissons, and to Soissons she dashed. And there for the first time she encountered downright treason. Guichard Bournel, captain of the town, who had been with her at Paris, refused to admit her on the ground that the place could not support a force so large as hers. The plea was common amongst French cities, and often justifiable; in this instance it happened to be dishonest, for Bournel had sold out to

the enemy. Joan used strong language: at her trial it was intimated that she had denied God and threatened to have Bournel drawn and quartered; she replied that those who said so must have misunderstood her, since she never swore, but in her fury she may easily have expressed her opinion of the man with more emphasis than she was aware.

Her followers, less able to bear disappointment than she, drifted away in search of more profitable employment elsewhere, leaving her with only her faithful personal following, probably not more than a hundred in all; d'Aulon, the chaplain, Pasquerel, her brother Pierre and her two pages were still amongst the number. She retreated to Crépy-en-Valois, a few miles to the south-west of Soissons, hoping to pick up recruits, but there she heard, on the 22nd, that the Burgundians were already in front of Compiègne, and at once resolved to hurry back into the town.

Some of her men protested, urging that they were too few to pass through the besieging army, but she gaily overruled them with, "By my faith, we are enough. I am going to see my good friends in Compiègne." She did not yet know that the Duke of Burgundy, with a sudden change of plan, had concentrated his whole force on the far side of the Oise, nor would it have mattered to her if she had, for she proposed to circumvent him by one of those daring night marches which she and la Hire alone of the captains of the age had the nerve to attempt.

She left Crépy at midnight. A large part of her way led through the forest, along rutted trails that lost themselves entirely in the gloom, yet she covered fifteen odd miles in a little over four hours and led her little band



intact through the Pierrefonds gate of Compiègne as the sun was rising.

Early in the morning she saw de Flavy, the captain, who explained the enemy's position to her. The hostile army numbered altogether about five thousand, divided into four groups of unequal size. John of Luxembourg, Count of Ligny, commanded the largest, composed of Burgundians and Flemings, at Clairoix, two and a half miles to the north, on the slope of the hill called Mont Ganelon. A second group, of Picards under Baudot de Noyelles, was at Margny, about three-fourths of a mile across the plain from the bridge-head. A third, composed entirely of English under Lords Arundel and Montgomery, lay at Venette, a mile and a quarter downstream. The reserve, under the duke himself, had its camp at Coudun, six miles to the north-west beyond the little stream called the Aronde, which intersected John of Luxembourg's position before emptying into the Oise.

Before Joan parted from Flavy they had decided between them that she should make a sortie that same afternoon. Who was responsible for that fateful decision it is impossible to say. Joan herself declared that after her warning at Melun she deferred to the advice of the other captains, apparently in the belief that a doomed creature like herself had no right to lead men into danger. It was only her subsequent impression. She was in independent command when she attacked Franquet d'Arras, when she raided Pont l'Evêque, when she led her troops from Crépy to Compiègne; and the sortie that afternoon was distinctly in her manner. Probably she did not realize how earnestly she urged her own opinions, any more than she realized that she was a more accomplished soldier after the Voices ceased

directing her than she had been before. Anything she says at her trial must be read in the light of her desire—and her need—to whitewash the Voices: for not only did they come from God, but on their authenticity depended her life.

There is no reliable evidence of what she did during the next ten or twelve hours, her last of freedom. In the *Mirror of Virtuous Women*, written many years later, it is said that she went to mass at the Church of Saint Jacques, where she also confessed and received the sacrament:

“then withdrew to one of the pillars of the church and said to several people of the town who were there and had brought along five or six score children who were eager to see her, ‘My children, I signify to you that I have been sold and betrayed and shall shortly be delivered to death. So I beg you to pray to God for me; for I shall never more have power to do a service to my king or the realm of France.’”

The author states, “These words I had at Compiègne, in the year 1498 in the month of July, from two ancient men, aged the one ninety-seven years and the other eighty-six, who said they had been present in the Church of Saint Jacques at Compiègne when the said Pucelle pronounced them.”

It is a pretty incident, but belongs rather with Joan's myth than her history. For one thing, the story of her betrayal was not coined till long after her death; for another, if she thought that she had been betrayed she would not have gone out that day, as she candidly admitted at her trial. But the little fable is an interesting example of the high colours with which her own century

began to paint the portrait of its best-loved heroine for posterity.

At five o'clock that afternoon Joan led her troops across the bridge, through the redoubt at the far end and on to the causeway that stretched northward over the marshy plain. She rode a dappled courser and over her armour wore a sleeveless cloak, or *huque*, of red velvet embroidered with gold, such as one often sees in a Van Eyck painting. Her object was a surprise attack on a small outpost of fifty or sixty men that Baudot de Noyelles had stationed half a mile down the causeway for closer observation of the city. With luck she should have been back long before nightfall. So little did the Burgundians expect to see her that they had already laid off their armour for the day.

A minute's gallop, a few minutes of hand to hand fighting, and the Burgundian outpost had ceased to exist. Joan gave the order to turn back, but by the time she had re-formed her column the men from Margny had come hurrying up. She beat them off, but they clung to her heels, hampering her retreat by compelling her to fight a running rear-guard action.

And then it was that her luck let her down. John of Luxembourg had chosen that moment for a reconnaissance from the slope to the north. The fracas on the causeway caught his eye and he sent a detachment galloping across the plain. Before Joan could shake off her pursuers she found herself suddenly taken in flank.

The faithful d'Aulon seized her bridle and tried to lead her back to the drawbridge and safety, but she shook him off. Some of the other men called on her to make a dash for it; she told them to hold their tongues and carry on. For even in that last and most desperate

## THE CAPTURE

of her fights she was thinking of her men and not of herself. If she scurried for cover they would be slaughtered as they followed her: their only chance for life depended on her ability to beat off the enemy while her followers made an orderly retreat. The Burgundian chronicler Georges Chastellain, most biting of scoffers, wrote: "Passing the nature of women, the Maid bore the brunt and strove with might to save her company, remaining behind like a true leader and the most valiant of the band." Her efforts were so far successful that some of her men were able to scramble over the redoubt at the bridge-head and others jump into some boats in the Oise and row themselves across; a few of these latter were drowned.

A bare few yards separated her from the drawbridge, a few seconds only lay between her and safety, when the English at Venette, attracted by the noise, came streaming along the river-bank to attack her from behind. Someone on the watch at Compiègne—it has never been discovered who—fearing that the whole besieging army would be drawn to the spot, gave the order for the drawbridge to be raised. As it clanked into place the Maid knew that she was done for. Assailed on all sides, her retreat cut off, there was nothing left but death or surrender.

She would have preferred to die had the choice been given her, but the enemy, as elated as if an army had fallen into their hands—so says the Burgundian chronicler Monstrelet, who was present—would not allow it; she was worth too much to them alive. They closed in on her, forcing her off the causeway to the plain "on the side of Picardy." Eager hands clutched at her, eager voices shouted, "Surrender to me and pledge your faith!"

But she would give her parole to no man, considering

that it belonged to God alone—"I have pledged my word to another than you," she cried in answer, "and I shall keep it." That proud refusal was presently to be a sore embarrassment to her judges.

Finally a Picard archer, "a rude, very thin fellow," seized hold of the red and gold cloak that flew from her shoulders and pulled her to the ground. The handful of her men left about her, including d'Aulon and her brother, could not come to her assistance through the throng; in an instant they too were prisoners.<sup>1</sup> The Bastard of Wandonne, the direct superior of the thin Picard, came running up, took charge of her on behalf of his feudal lord, John of Luxembourg, and hurried her off to Margny as quickly as possible.

Many believed, in her lifetime and afterward, that Flavy betrayed her; it is very unlikely. There were undoubtedly spies in the town—the names of some of them are known—but that he used them to notify John of Luxembourg to prepare an ambush, or that he pulled up the drawbridge for any reason save military prudence, sounds like an invention of enemies who later had good reason to hate him. His splendid defence of Compiègne during the next five months shows that he was unshakably loyal. But Joan's admirers, anxious to establish a parallel between what they called "the Maid's Passion" and her Saviour's, seized on the gossip and her vague premonitions to round out her career with a betrayal.

<sup>1</sup> They were later ransomed.

## CHAPTER X

### PREPARATION FOR THE MASTERPIECE

SHE was received with all the respect due to an honourable prisoner of war. The Bastard of Wandonne led her back to Margny "happier than if he had a king between his hands." No shout of whore or witch was raised against her as she passed through the throng of soldiers, only "great cries and rejoicings" at the sight of the girl whom "they feared more than any other captain to this present time." They were Burgundians, but they were also Frenchmen, and their chroniclers take no pains to conceal their pride in her.

That evening the Duke of Burgundy rode down from Coudon "in all his pomp" to pay her a visit at the lodgings set apart for her. Monstrelet was present at the meeting between the two most celebrated people alive, but all he has to say is that "the Duke spoke several words with her, which I do not remember very well." Perhaps he thought it politic for some reason to forget what he heard, when composing his history some years later; or perhaps it was the strange selectivity of the medieval mind. John of Luxembourg came in person to escort her to his headquarters at Clairoix, where he treated her with the courtesy befitting her rank. It was almost certainly his purpose at that moment to sell her to her own side as soon as satisfactory ransom could be agreed upon—and, of

course, paid. In the ordinary way, no one, not even the English, would have dreamed of interfering with the transaction.

But all of Joan's enemies were not in armour; there was one little group in frocks, more implacable and dangerous than all the rest, who had no intention of letting her escape by way of the customary gentlemen's bargain. In the cloisters of the University of Paris white hands rubbed each other under rough folds of monkish gowns, and smile thinly answered smile from under bent cowls. For to the professors of the venerable institution huddled in the gloomy alleyways on the left bank of the Seine, had come an opportunity that men often desire but rarely receive: to revenge wrongs to self in the performance of a sacred public duty.

It is easier to describe than to define the exact relation of the University to Joan's tragedy. It procured her prosecution and reviewed, in the capacity of final court of appeal, the evidence against her, yet from first to last it had no official standing in the matter. It was neither an executive nor a judicial body; it had neither the means to buy her nor the power to pass sentence on her; yet its terrific moral pressure, backed by the weight of an almost incredible moral authority, enabled it to set the vast sluggish machinery of Church and State in motion against her.

For nearly a century the learned doctors of Paris had been laying down the law to Christendom. The Great Schism, by dividing papal authority, had practically destroyed it; the government of the Church and the guidance of its flock had been taken over by the Councils, in which the voice of the Sorbonne, speaking through its distinguished sons, was predominant. In the Chapel

of the Mathurins on the hill of Sainte Geneviève the members of the Faculties met to confer on the affairs, religious and secular, of Europe, and out of those conferences resulted the deposition of popes, schemes (like that of Troyes) for the transfer of titles to kingdoms, spiritual and practical counsel for fifty million human beings. "*The light of all the sciences, the extirpator of error . . .*"—the words addressed to Joan by one of her judges fairly represent contemporary opinion of the University and the University's opinion of itself.

The students were the pick of Europe; only the most devout, ambitious, intellectually eager, would or could have submitted to its curriculum. For years on end they lived in cold dark cells, going only a little hungrier on the prescribed fast days than on the others, nourishing their minds on Holy Writ and the austere wisdom of the lecture-room. The survivors were sent out into the world as priests, lawyers, physicians, with the best education that the age afforded and an unshakable devotion to the University. They looked to it for their opinions and help in their advancement; it counted on them to spread abroad its fame and its influence.

But a certain number remained behind each year to replenish the four Faculties of theology, law, medicine and the arts; they were the chosen, on whom Alma Mater lavished the full appalling riches of her discipline. Humanity had been driven out of them, toleration swallowed up in a giddy sense of their own superiority and under a mechanical humility implanted a pre-occupation with power that amounted to a mania.

They were so thoroughly conscious of their collective responsibility as the repository of all truth that they forgot their individual liability to error. Pulling together



they could make people go their way, since it was the only right way; out of their certainty they could impose their advice on perplexed governors of men; and so they were able to assist one another to the richest benefices, bishoprics, cardinal's hats, the Chair of Saint Peter itself. *Esprit de corps* opened so many opportunities for useful activity to the reverend gentlemen that they had little time to think about their membership in the less exclusive brotherhood of Christ.

They hated Joan openly on the public's behalf and privately on their own. She was reputed to be a sorceress and a schismatic, therefore an enemy of innocent souls. For the Church was the way to salvation and the fabric of the Church the pure doctrine of which the University was the vigilant guardian; falsehood and unorthodoxy imperilled the fabric and might end in destroying the Church unless they were themselves destroyed in time. The professors forgot, in their zeal, that they were no more the Church than were the ecclesiastics on the other side who had already passed on Joan's orthodoxy nor paused to consider that they were using the Church to pay off their own political scores.

They hid the unpleasant truth even from themselves by calling her "bloodthirsty and seditious," a disturber of the peace and "an enemy of the realm." They genuinely wanted the war to end, because it hampered their activities, burned their monasteries, dried up their revenues, but they wanted it to end the right way; and then Joan had come along to put new life into it and seriously threaten to end it the wrong way. The University had fought Charles VII and his predecessors tooth and nail, since as churchmen they could not tolerate the idea of a national king over them. They had outcast

and insulted him at Troyes (the Treaty was largely their work), caused his followers to be murdered in Paris—if he won the least they could expect was to be deprived of everything they possessed and cast into outer darkness.

So they itched to lay their hands on Joan, both to prevent further injuries in the future and to undo those of the past: for if they could prove her a witch, as they had no doubt they could, they would be able to prove to the popular satisfaction their own suspicion that she owed her victories and the king his crown to Satan's machinations. At the same time they would be settling the personal score they owed her for the humiliating occasion eight months earlier, when her presence at the Saint Honoré gate had sent them cowering in fright to their cells.

They wasted no time. Joan was captured on May 23rd, the news reached Paris on the 25th, and on the 26th a letter was on its way, signed by two notaries of the University and under the seal of the Vicar-General of the Inquisition, to the Duke of Burgundy requesting from him "a certain woman named Joan, whom the enemies of this realm call the Maid . . . by common rumour guilty of sowing and spreading various lesions and scandals against the divine honour . . . causing the loss of souls of divers simple Christians . . . to appear before the prosecutor for the Holy Inquisitor" to answer for her crimes.

The duke refused to be bothered. He had no particular grievance against Joan, since it was the English who had been chiefly harmed by her, and Philip was always able to view his allies' misfortunes with a philosophical temper. Not being very devout he was not much worried by

witches, and as the most powerful patron of the University he could afford to be indifferent to its opinion. In any event the prisoner was not his to dispose of but John of Luxembourg's, who, though in Burgundian service, was drawing pay from the English under the name of John Lusshingburgh.

But John was in no hurry to hand his captive over to the Inquisition, since soldiers did not usually do that sort of thing to one another, while his business instinct warned him that the priests were not prepared to pay what she was worth. They might threaten pains and penalties in the next world, but the French, or possibly the English, were more likely to offer cash in this. The love of money was strongly developed in the Luxembourg family: it was John's elder brother, the Bishop of Thérouanne, who was so quick to scent a profit in the armour left by Joan at Saint Denis. John filed the letter away without answering it and sent Joan, with d'Aulon to attend her, to his castle at Beaulieu-en-Vermandois near by.

The Faculty, annoyed but persevering, transferred negotiations into the hands of Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, where they legally belonged since Joan had been taken in his diocese.<sup>1</sup> The University did not by any means retire from the affair, however. Both the Duke of Burgundy and John of Luxembourg received letters praying their favour for Cauchon's efforts: the

<sup>1</sup> Compiègne was partly in the diocese of Beauvais, partly in that of Soissons, a cross on the bridge marking the boundary. The commissioners of the Rehabilitation questioned Cauchon's right to try Joan on the ground that she had committed no offence in his diocese, but they did not dispute his jurisdiction on geographical grounds. He himself seems to have had some doubts in the matter, for at the trial Joan was asked a series of questions about the exact spot of her capture which would have been pointless unless Cauchon was trying to satisfy himself on the point.

Duke got off with a reproachful reference to his neglect of the first letter, but John was confronted with a hint of excommunication if he refused to co-operate, politely wrapped in a promise of "joys without end" if he obeyed his higher promptings.

Armed with these credentials, Cauchon went to the Burgundian camp before Compiègne to see the Duke in person and communicate the charges against Joan. Philip the Good received him impressively before a great concourse of "knights and other noble witnesses," and gave the schedule of accusations to his chancellor, Nicolas Rolin (Jan Van Eyck's immortal patron), with instructions to pass it on to John of Luxembourg—"who read it, at least so it seemed to me," noted the bishop with dissatisfaction at the end of his memorandum of the interview. He then went to Rouen to see how far Bedford and the English exchequer were prepared to help.

Pierre Cauchon was a living testimonial to the advantages of an education at the University of Paris. He held its diplomas in law and theology, had been made its Rector when he was barely thirty, and continued to serve it usefully thereafter for over a quarter of a century. In return it had pushed him up the ecclesiastical ladder, made him chaplain of this and canon of that, Bishop of Beauvais in 1420 when he was fifty years old, and one of the richest priests in the kingdom by 1430.

But Cauchon had early discovered in himself greater versatility than even the Church could employ fully. Promotion brought him into contact with the great of the earth, and he soon learned how to make them useful to him by making himself useful to them. Henry V

and Bedford employed him in turn on important diplomatic missions carrying suitable emoluments; he also held permanent office as Chancellor in France to the dowager Queen of England. John the Fearless had sent him to the Council of Constance to support with his eloquence the singular proposition that he—John—had acted as the obedient instrument of the divine will in murdering the Duke of Orleans. Philip the Good made him a peer of the realm in gratitude, and did him the honour of attending personally at his induction. That was one of the very few times his diocese saw him in the whole dozen years of his incumbency.

He had known two serious reversals of fortune in his life and still admitted to one great ambition. In 1413 he had led a riot in Paris and been forced to run for his life; but the coming of the Anglo-Burgundians had transformed his mistake into a merit and enabled him to revenge himself on those who had proscribed him. Then, in 1429, Joan had turned up and deprived him of the revenues of his diocese. The loss was to be made up to him by the English, but that he did not yet know as he rode across country to solicit their collaboration in—but he probably never called it revenge even to himself. . . . The ambition was to be Archbishop of Rouen, and he hoped to satisfy it by the way in which he managed this matter of Joan.

Chapter politics robbed him of the archbishopric; he died Bishop of Lisieux, in Normandy, instead. The effigy made for his tomb in the cathedral still exists, the mitred head resting on a pillow, hands pressed together, a crozier in the crook of the left elbow, a dog at his feet. From the grey marble emerges with astonishing realism the portrait of a burly man with full, firm cheeks and rugged features.





It is a face on which the sculptor has written intellect and self-confidence, greed and violence in characters as clear as the inscription on the paper mitre Joan wore to the stake. The thick lips are turned down, and at the corners of the mouth hovers a faintly sardonic smile: it is as if Pierre Cauchon knew that those who stared at his image in death would remember nothing whatever about him, despite his immense importance in life, except his conduct of one trial among the many over which he had been called upon to preside.

If he had not been a man of persistence and resource he might have escaped posterity's unflattering notice altogether. Neither he nor Bedford left any record of the progress of their transaction, but it took so long a time that it must have come near falling through altogether. The bishop's visit to Compiègne took place on July 14th, and the first indication that the regent meant to do business is a document dated September 3rd. It is obvious that Bedford must have given the subject much heart-searching thought before he decided, and Cauchon many an anxious hour lest the French suddenly come in on the bidding and carry off the prize, to the detriment of God's honour and all loyal subjects of King Henry.

Charles VII was apparently doing something toward Joan's release, but doing it in his own ineffective, half-hearted way, and wrapping his efforts in such mystery that no trace of them remains in the French archives. It is only through his enemies and a neutral letter-writer that he is acquitted of the accusation usually made by Joan's admirers, that he washed his hands of her altogether until it suited his purposes to rehabilitate her memory.



The most obvious thing for him to do was to sound her captors on the subject of her ransom. The University evidently feared such a move, for in its letter to John of Luxembourg it included the following stern warning:

"It would be an intolerable offence against the divine Majesty if the matter remained where it is, or if it happened that this woman was delivered, and so lost to us, which it is said that certain of our enemies wish to contrive, striving for that end with the most subtle means, and what is worse, with money or ransom."

If Charles really did anything so shocking as to offer money for Joan before Cauchon had tapped Bedford for the same purpose, there is unluckily no record of the deed. Perhaps he did not offer enough.

The *Chronicle of Antonio Morosini*, a collection of contemporary Venetian news-letters, absolves him of the charge and says that he went to work in other, less expensive ways. As soon as the king heard, says the chronicle, that the English were preparing to raise a tax for Joan's purchase, he sent an embassy to the Duke of Burgundy to forbid him to sell the girl at any price, threatening retaliation on Burgundian prisoners if any harm befell her. These threats were often made—the Bastard had sent one to the English when they detained Joan's heralds—and usually ignored, since they cut both ways. Charles never carried his out.

What probably happened in the end is that he lost interest when he saw how difficult and complicated the matter was; nothing would have been more characteristic of him. Any bid he might submit the University could counter with enough moral pressure to make John of Luxembourg hesitate, and a promise that the English

would do even better. Any effort to deliver Joan by force involved an invasion of the enemy's country on the full scale of war. There is a suggestion in the chronicle that he appealed to the Pope, but if so nothing came of it. The situation called for the lavish expenditure of energy, tact and money, and Charles was singularly lacking in all three.

He had one card up his sleeve which he never played, and the omission to make use of it may explain his state of mind when nothing came of his first tentative efforts for Joan's release. His chancellor, Regnault de Chartres, Archbishop of Rheims, was primate of France and therefore Cauchon's metropolitan with power to suspend him from his diocese. Cauchon might have defied him and insisted on trying Joan despite the suspension, but in that event the trial would have been invalid. Regnault did nothing of the sort: instead he wrote a letter to the people of Rheims, to soothe their alarm at Joan's capture and to assure them that God had not neglected to replace her:

"Joan was taken (he explained—the original letter is lost and only a précis of it exists) because she would not take advice and did everything of her own will. However, a young shepherd has come to the king, from the mountains of Gévaudan, who says that he will do no less than the Maid has done; he has God's commandment to go with the king's soldiers, and the English and Burgundians will without doubt be discomfited. He will punish them the more for Joan's sake, though God has suffered her to be captured on account of her great pride and the rich clothes she wore, and because she had not done what He had ordered."

## JOAN OF ARC

Those being the sentiments of the king's intimate advisers toward Joan, it was not difficult to make that lackadaisical monarch feel that he was taking an unnecessary amount of trouble over her. There was just enough truth mixed up with the malice to influence a man who had suffered considerable annoyance from the Maid's opposition and was never overburdened with a sense of gratitude. There was also the consolation of William the shepherd boy's timely appearance: his profession raised hopes that he might turn out to be another King David, while he had the inestimable advantage over Joan of bearing on his body the stigmata or five wounds of Christ. Unluckily he proved to lack her genius; the English soon caught him, sewed him in a sack and drowned him in the Seine, thus avoiding the trouble and expense they were put to by his predecessor.

While her friends and enemies deliberated on ways and means of extracting her from prison, Joan nearly solved their dilemma by breaking out of it. Somehow she contrived to shut her guards into a tower, and would have escaped "between two pieces of wood" had not the porter seen and stopped her. Nothing else is known of this first of her two attempts to escape, since she declined at her trial to enlighten her judges further. Apparently it was a near thing, and John of Luxembourg, alarmed lest she try again, perhaps next time in conjunction with a band of French raiders, moved her at the beginning of August to another of his castles, Beau-revoir, situated near Cambrai, forty miles deeper in Burgundian territory.

There she was guarded with considerable strictness, for the clink of gold was beginning to sound loud in

John's ears. Her attendants were taken from her and at night she was kept locked high up in a tower. But at Beaurevoir she also met, for the last time on earth, with the kindness of women, indeed almost the last kindness of any sort from anybody.

The other inmates of the castle were the owner's wife, Jeanne Viscountess of Meaux, and her aunt, also named Jeanne, a magnificent old lady, godmother to the king and sister to a saint<sup>1</sup> canonized largely through her efforts. These two ladies took the little prisoner to their hearts instantly, fussed over her, exclaimed in wonder at her piety and her exploits, of whose telling they could not have enough. They laboured with all their might to prevent John of Luxembourg from selling her to the English, and the elder, who knew that she was dying, begged him in her will, drawn on September 10th, not to soil his hands with so filthy a bargain; she died at Boulogne in October while Joan was still at Beaurevoir.

They also tried desperately to make her save herself. Her man's garments, if not the root of her offence, were its outrageous symbol in the eyes of her enemies, a defiant reminder of all that they hated her for. The ladies of Luxembourg suspected that fact before Joan discovered it too late, and pleaded with her to change, offering to supply her out of their own wardrobes or to have made for her such dresses as she desired. But she refused, regretfully—"I would have done it at the request of these two ladies rather than for any other in France, my Queen excepted." The male costume was to her also a symbol: she must wear it, she declared, till her labours were ended and God released her from her vow. For she expected now, on the strength of certain

<sup>1</sup> Peter of Luxembourg.

Delphic utterances from the Voices, to go free and resume her place at the head of the dusty, clanking columns. . . .

She must have been a queer-looking object before she left Beaurevoir. From the time of her capture to the time of her death, a whole year, she had only the ordinary clothes that soldiers wore under their armour: a black, padded linen doublet laced up the front, short drawers of deer-skin for wear in the saddle (though these might have been exchanged for white cotton or linen), black wool hose fastened to the doublet by laces and eyelets, padded leather shoes. The garments might have been washed at night, since in captivity she probably took them off and slept naked according to the custom of the time, but they must have been sadly worn at knee and elbow.

Nevertheless her shabbiness did not prevent her from receiving attention of a kind to which she had long been unused—ever since her first coming into France, in fact, where “several great lords, desiring to know if they might enjoy her carnal favour, came before her elegantly arrayed.” Those gentlemen had the customary sensation of desire cooling in her presence: her would-be seducer at Beaurevoir was less mysteriously put off. He was a friend of John of Luxembourg’s called Aimond de Macy, who called to see Joan out of curiosity, as did many others. In the course of his conversation with her it struck him that she was an attractive young woman—perhaps her hair had grown and restored some of the charm of her sex, or perhaps her helplessness touched his masculine heart. He tried to convey his sentiments by taking hold of her breasts, which those who had a chance to know testify were “pretty and well formed.”

Aimond quickly discovered his mistake: "She repulsed me with all her might," he declared in rueful surprise. Since he tells the story himself, he avoids unpleasant details; but when a tailor of Rouen tried the same trick some time later while measuring the Maid for a gown, the repulse took the form of a lusty slap on the face.

She was occasionally allowed other and more welcome visitors from the outside world. Two burghers of Tournai passed the night at the castle on their way from a visit to the king, who may have instructed them to call on her, and carried away a letter from Joan to the people of their city, asking for twenty or thirty gold crowns to pay for her current needs.<sup>1</sup> The money was promptly sent: had the government imposed a tax to meet the whole of the ransom the people of France would have paid it cheerfully. But it was not asked, and all they could do for their idol was to march barefoot in processions and have special prayers recited in the churches imploring Heaven to grant her a speedy release.

But the priests of the other side were assaulting the seat of mercy with equal fervour and a considerably more efficient human instrument to abet their prayers. By the beginning of September Cauchon and Bedford hammered out a working agreement whereby the latter should find money for getting hold of Joan and the former look after the machinery for getting rid of her.

Not that Bedford required much persuasion. He was all for putting the Maid where she could do no further damage, but he wanted to be sure where he stood before he committed himself to a very considerable investment.

<sup>1</sup> Prisoners of war awaiting ransom customarily paid for their own food and other necessities.

There was not only the ransom to be considered, but the elaborate trial on which Cauchon insisted. In the ordinary way the fees of the judges and assessors, their travelling expenses and the other incidental costs would have been borne by the diocese of Beauvais, but with the chapter funds no longer at the bishop's command it was clear that the burden would fall on the English treasury. Nor was the Regent altogether happy in his mind about availing himself of the services of an inquisitorial court, since his countrymen had always refused to allow the Holy Office in their midst at any price. In fact some of his advisers urged him to cut out both the priests and the additional expense by buying Joan direct and drowning her in bluff, straightforward English fashion.

John of Lancaster was a man of too considerable subtlety to be deluded into such simple expedients. Joan was not a vagrant shepherd or a stray preacher of nonconformist lunacies: to kill her without suitable excuse might have the disastrous effect of making a martyr of her. Moreover, there was no use killing her without first curing the annoying popular notion that she came from God. If she died in the odour of sanctity the odour would still cling to Charles VII's title, and Bedford, having with great difficulty managed to induce his colleagues in England to send over young Henry VI the previous spring, admitted the necessity of foisting Charles's coronation on the devil before he could venture to have his own candidate satisfactorily crowned. The one way of impeaching Charles's title in his subjects' eyes was by officially attaching Satan's label to Joan, and the only man in a position to do that was Pierre Cauchon. So the bishop was authorized to approach John of Luxem-

bourg with an offer, while the Regent undertook to raise the necessary money through a special tax on the already well-bled province of Normandy.

It was explicitly understood between the two men, however, that if and when Cauchon took delivery of the Maid he was to regard her not as a gift but as a loan. By all the law and the precedents a person held for trial by the Church was kept in its prisons and disposed of at its absolute discretion after sentence, but Bedford was paying an exceptional price and felt himself entitled to lay down exceptional conditions. For the duration of the trial the prisoner must be kept in an English gaol under English gaolers, who would be responsible for her security. If the verdict went the right way further discussion would be rendered academic: the secular arm would simply take charge of her execution, as the law required. But if the priests—Bedford did not forget that they were lawyers as well—happened to get tangled up in their own subtleties and let her off with a lesser sentence, he did not propose to give them permanent possession of his costly purchase: "In any event it is our intention to reclaim the said Joan if it so happen that she be not convicted," read the memorandum of agreement with sinister lucidity. Cauchon kicked hard at the conditions. They were unlawful, they were humiliating. But Bedford stood firm, and he held the purse-strings. Cauchon agreed, with certain important mental reservations.

Then he sat down and wrote, in the name of King Henry and of himself as Bishop of Beauvais—his admission that he was serving two masters is of the utmost significance—a letter addressed jointly to the Duke of Burgundy, John of Luxembourg and the Bastard of Wandonne,



requiring them to surrender the Maid to him for trial. He was not prepared to admit that she was a prisoner of war with the right to be ransomed . . . her captors ought to hand her over gratis . . . but he was prepared to recognize (as a man of the world) that they might expect reasonable compensation . . . "so the king is prepared in his liberality to pay up to six thousand francs (then equivalent to six thousand pounds in gold) to Luxembourg and to the Bastard of Wandonne a pension of two or three hundred pounds a year."

The bishop was a cunning man of business. He named an elastic set of figures in the artful expectation that the vendors would leap at the topmost and so in actual fact let Bedford off cheaply, for the Regent had really authorized him to go higher.<sup>1</sup> Unluckily John was no mean haggler himself and could always fall back on the argument that he was not sure whether he wanted to sell or not. He also had his brother Louis, the chancellor, who was handling the financial side of the deal for England, to advise him of the state of the market. Cauchon had to come out with the full maximum, ten thousand pounds in settlement of all liabilities—a sum that was by long custom literally a king's ransom, "although the capture of this woman," as the bishop pointed out with severity, "is in no way comparable to the capture of a king, prince or other person of great estate." And on that basis the bargain was struck.

The exact date is unknown. Early in the next year Cauchon acknowledged the sum of six hundred and

<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to tell from the one extant letter whether or not he had to go back for authority to make the increased offer, but time and other circumstances would seem to indicate that he had it up his sleeve.

seventy-five pounds from the English exchequer for services rendered—including journeys to Compiègne, Rouen and Beaurevoir “in the matter of Joan called the Maid”—over a period ending September 30th, 1430. The wording of the receipt strongly indicates that the transaction was not yet completed. On November 21st a letter from the University of Paris to Henry VI speaks of Joan being already in the king’s power. At some date between the two the ten thousand pounds was raised, paid over to John of Luxembourg and title in the prisoner transferred.

By early October she had already guessed what was in store for her: Cauchon’s visit to the castle in September would have warned her even if she had not been able to read the growing anxiety in the faces of the two kindly ladies who were trying vainly to save her. One thing she was determined upon, and that was not to be taken alive by the English. She made another attempt to escape with the aid of a set of files—there is nothing more than the bare mention of them at her trial—but the watch was too close and they were taken away from her. She then measured with her eye the distance from the window of her tower to the earth. Sixty feet—possible liberty, much more probable death. Liberty to her meant the chance to return and help Compiègne, desperately pressed and threatened, so she had heard, with the slaughter of all children in it under the age of seven as punishment for its stubborn resistance. Death in itself she was not afraid of, except that God might construe it in the circumstances as the sin of suicide.

She turned to her Voices for guidance: someone must have heard her speaking aloud to them, for her words

were later reported. Saint Catherine told her to put the thought out of her mind, promising that God would help both her and the people of Compiègne. Joan responded that if God meant to aid Compiègne she wanted to be there—and that was her own, unmistakable accent. The saint sternly bade her to submit to her fate, saying that she would not be delivered until she had seen the King of England.<sup>1</sup> Joan, not nearly as submissive as she would have liked to be, returned, "Truly, I don't want to see him, and I'd rather die than be in the hands of the English."

Again an emergency had arisen to bring the Counsel and her will into conflict, and again the Counsel lost. She debated the question further with herself and decided that God would read her heart and realize that she would not be seeking death for its own sake, merely accepting it as an unavoidable risk for the sake of possible freedom. Neglecting to communicate her final resolution to the Voices, she commended her soul to God and the Virgin Mary and made the leap.

Miraculously, as she thought—and it is not easy to dispute with her in this instance—she was not killed. Her gaolers came running up, found that she was badly hurt but conscious, and burst into reproaches against her for having violated her parole, which in point of fact she had not given. For several days she lay between life and death, unable to move or to take nourishment, but more concerned with the burden on her soul than the pain of her body. Then Saint Catherine appeared, heard her in confession, and promised her absolution for her disobedience, assuring her at the same time that

<sup>1</sup> Whether she ever saw Henry VI is unknown: for a time he was resident in Rouen while she was in prison there.

Compiègne would surely be relieved before winter. Greatly comforted, she was soon able to eat and drink again, and her hardy constitution quickly did the rest. The Voices were right about Compiègne, for the siege was raised on October 15th—but they were apparently wrong about the absolution, for at her trial Joan was to learn that she had damned her soul in a variety of ways by that desperate leap.

As soon as she recovered her new owners came to fetch her. They did not dare take her straight across country to Rouen, for Normandy was infested with roving French bands led by her friends—Alençon, la Hire and others, as well as the Constable Richemont, who by one account had previously tried to kidnap her from the king himself. The first halt of any length was at Arras, an important city belonging to Philip the Good, where various of the friendly inhabitants offered to supply her with woman's clothes, as had the ladies at Beaurevoir and for the same reason. But she refused as before: she might try to evade her enemies by a mortal risk but she would not placate them by repudiating the least part of her mission, as she was soon to tell them to their faces.

The length of her stay in Arras is uncertain and few details of it are known. She was shown a painting, the work of a Scotsman, representing her in armour on one knee before the king in the act of handing him a letter; she says that it is the only portrait of herself she ever saw, though contemporary France was said to be full of imaginary likenesses of her. She may also have tried to escape again, for her possession of the files is mentioned in connection with Arras as well as Beaurevoir: the reason that the attempt is buried in such complete

mystery is that when her judges asked her about the files she answered briefly, "If they were found on me, there is not much else I can tell you," and would go no further into the matter.

From Arras she was taken to the castle of Crotoy, at the mouth of the Somme, where Alençon had spent his long captivity. Then she was ferried across to Saint Valery, re-embarked for the voyage to Dieppe, and so gradually brought round by sea to the mouth of the Seine and up to Rouen. The itinerary and the dates of the halts are at best a patchwork of inference and all that is certain is that she arrived in Rouen before the 28th of December, probably during the first half of the month.

She was clapped into a cell in the tower of the old royal castle built by King Philip Augustus, who had kept Richard the Lion-hearted in captivity two and a half centuries before. The cell was on the first floor, up a flight of eight steps, large but extremely dark "under the stairs on the side of the fields," though the window was too high for her to enjoy the view. The only article of furniture in the room was a straw pallet.

There was never even a pretence of treating the girl with the barest decency, and the precautions taken against her escape were grotesque in their brutality. Her legs were fettered and an iron belt riveted round her waist connected by a six-foot length of chain to a large block of wood. Several witnesses also describe a cage which a locksmith had been ordered to make for her, in which she could neither lie down nor stand up; none of them speak of actually seeing her in it, however, so it is possible that it was not used or was discarded

early. A special guard under William Talbot and John Grey was delegated to watch over her, three men always in the cell with her day and night, two outside the door. They were especially chosen because they were the toughest specimens in the whole of the Rouen garrison and were popularly known by the name of *houcepaillers*, from the word meaning "to torment." They displayed an absolutely fiendish ingenuity in the art, insulting the prisoner, maltreating her, and several times attempting to rape her. In the end they did their bit—and a very large bit it was—toward destroying her.

No conception of hell has ever exceeded in horror the few bare hints relating to Joan's life during the two months she waited in that cell for trial. The three short paces back and forth at the end of her chain; the endless winter nights with the five oafs jeering at her or swearing over their dice as she tried to sleep; the deadly monotony and overshadowing terror of the ordeal before her, without sight of a friendly face or—what meant more to her than to almost any other human being of whom there is record—the solace of her religion, since she was forbidden to hear Mass or to make confession.

Occasional visitors were admitted to see her, but they were not of her own choosing. Most of them came through the favour of the English authorities, to stare and make fatuous remarks; the rest were civil or ecclesiastical officials with sly questions to ask that would be duly noted down against her. One party came in both capacities and included John of Luxembourg, John's brother the Bishop of Théroutanne, the Earl of Warwick, governor of Rouen and tutor to Henry VI, the Earl of Stafford, a member of the

English Council, and Joan's old acquaintance from Beaurevoir, Aimond de Macy, who describes what took place.

John of Luxembourg, cruel and childish even for his times, said, "Joan, I have come to buy you back again on condition that you promise never again to bear arms against us." His only possible motive could have been to raise her hopes so that he and his friends might laugh at her disappointment.

She looked at him as she had looked at the chieftains who tried to take her in before the attack on the Tourelles, with perhaps a shade more of hostility, and answered evenly, "You are mocking me—I know that you have neither the will nor the power."

John, not wanting to see his little joke fall flat, persisted. She turned away saying, "I well know that the English want to kill me,<sup>1</sup> believing that after my death they will gain the realm of France. But if there were a hundred thousand Godons more than there are now, they would not conquer the realm."

Stafford, a man of hot temper, drew his dagger to strike her, but Warwick seized hold of his arm and restrained him. The incident might sound improbable if not for the fact that at another time Stafford drew his sword against someone who spoke well of Joan, and that Warwick, who shared Bedford's mind, was later considerably agitated lest Joan should die of an illness before the verdict against her was reached.

The most regular of the visitors, and the most interesting, was a soft-spoken man of forty, introduced to Joan as a

<sup>1</sup> A literal translation of Aimond de Macy's words would be "will kill me," but since Joan firmly believed that she would escape there must have been a small slip either of the deponent's memory or of the scribe or the editor's pen.

fellow-captive and fellow-countryman from the Lorraine Marches, where he had followed the trade of cobbler. The substance of their conversations is unknown, though they were carried on within earshot of scribes conveniently stationed to take them down. For he was, of course, that stock figure of inquisitorial and state trials during several centuries, the friend delegated by the court to trap the accused into confession. His victim was presently to know him as Nicolas Loiseleur, master of arts and bachelor in theology of the University of Paris, Canon of Rouen and intimate friend of his employer the Bishop of Beauvais.

In actual fact it is impossible to say how much he got out of Joan, or if he got anything at all. The record of the trial is naturally silent on the subject. Joan herself, who had no hesitation in telling Cauchon what she thought of him, never alludes to Loiseleur's treachery, though she had excellent opportunities for doing so. It is only at the Rehabilitation that his activities are exposed by the same colleagues who had seen no harm in them at the time. But the time had changed, Charles VII had become Charles the Victorious and those gentlemen his most devoted servants, so they tumbled over one another in producing souvenirs of Loiseleur's villainy—and Joan's immense and incredible idiocy.

They pictured him slinking into her cell all through the trial as the cobbler and sitting before her in the full light of the court-room as himself, without her once suspecting that there might be something amiss. A burgher of Rouen alleges that he even passed himself off to her as Saint Catherine in order to make her do and say what he wished: apparently he could simulate



a heavenly female voice as well as the Lorraine accent. Several witnesses have him throw fits after her condemnation and die of remorse for his part in it—though he managed to put in fifteen or twenty busy and on the whole prosperous years first. But then most of the participants in the trial who survived to do the right thing by the Maid at her Rehabilitation were convinced that the rest had come to a bad end.

With Joan securely attached to her block of wood and his spy to take her mind off her gaolers, Cauchon was free to devote himself to the preparations for the trial. There were a thousand and one things for him to see to: the collection of the evidence of witnesses in many parts of France, the selection and organization of the court, the preparation of the case for the prosecution. He had to satisfy the suspicions of the English on the one hand and the somewhat querulous demands of the University on the other. The latter had already written him on November 21st its opinion that if "Your Paternity had shown a more active diligence in pursuing this affair, the case would already have been argued before an ecclesiastical tribunal"—a somewhat unjust reproach in view of the fact that the prisoner was not at that date his to deal with. Alma Mater also wanted the trial to be held in Paris under its supervision, since Cauchon was physically unable to hold it in his own diocese, but the English preferred not to trust the proceedings out from under their own sight. The matter was finally settled by a grant of territory from the chapter of Rouen, which was temporarily without an episcopal head of its own. Cauchon was also busy at the moment pulling strings for a certain candidate to fill that vacancy. Luckily he was a man of exceptional energy and quite

unburdened by any sacerdotal demands on his time.

The collection of the preliminary evidence was complicated by the fact that all the witnesses lived in just those parts of France where the writ of Cauchon's employers did not run, and if the ordinary approach by way of subpœna was tried there was likely to be trouble as soon as the witnesses knew what was wanted of them. Thus when a commission with letters under the seal of Henry VI appeared in Domrémy to inquire into Joan's childhood and character, there was nearly a riot and "the said commissioners retired prudently for fear of their lives." The people of France were not eager to help her enemies do their Maid down. A certain amount of information was actually forwarded to the royal officer at Chaumont, Jean de Torceney, but it was so favourable to the accused (even though her intimate friends were not examined) that de Torceney swore at the commissioners as "false Armagnacs." In the rest of France reliance seems to have been placed almost entirely on popular gossip unsupported by oath and unsifted by any kind of critical examination.

Not that it mattered much either way. The rules of the Inquisition allowed a suspected person to be arrested on common rumour—*fama*—and forbade him to see either the preliminary information or the witnesses who had deposed to it. He might be hailed before a court on a tissue of lies supplied by lunatics or enemies interested in his death. He would never know who they were or what they said. The purpose of the preliminary inquiries was merely to supply material for questioning: the business of the accused was to answer and the privilege of the court to convict him out of his own mouth if

possible. It was magistrate, judge, jury and prosecution all rolled into one; it even supplied counsel for the defence, when it decided to concede the privilege, out of its own number. The procedure was explicitly devised to "expedite justice" and to "cut red tape" by making trials "simple and direct, without clamour of advocates or embroidery of judges"—a judicial ideal best realized in practice only by the revolutionary tribunal.

Joan's sole part in the preliminary activities was to submit to another test for chastity. The committee on this occasion consisted of the Duchess of Bedford, Mistress Ann Bavon and another, anonymous, lady. The examination was conducted in her cell, with the gaolers presumably absent, but with the Duke of Bedford, according to account, posted at a knot-hole on the next floor. It may be that the duke was libelled; if not he probably considered that "a limb of Satan" was not entitled to have her modesty respected. The report was in Joan's favour: a fact which the prosecution neatly got round later without once directly impugning her virginity.

The organization of the court was Cauchon's most delicate problem. He knew perfectly well that at best it would be open to the accusation of partiality, since his choice was restricted, both by circumstances and his own desire, to men known to be Joan's political enemies. The one chance of having its verdict (if it happened to be unfavourable to her) accepted by the public was to choose colleagues of such outstanding distinction and in such number as to avoid any suspicion that the court was packed. The bishop genuinely wanted, as he said, a *pulchrum processum*—a beautiful trial, a masterpiece of legal construction in which the most captious could find no flaw. He overlooked the fatal flaw in

the very foundation, that he had no moral right to conduct the trial at all: but men of his temperament and training are apt to underestimate the effect of their interests and prejudices on their professional attitudes of mind.

A diocesan court for the trial of offences against the faith nominally consisted of the bishop, who was the sole judge, sitting with three or four canons designated by the chapter and an equal number of lawyers to advise him in the capacity of assessors. The local representative of the Holy Office might be delegated to act as co-judge, but the practice varied and the court was no less an inquisitorial body for his absence. Cauchon, anxious to leave no stone unturned that might contribute to the perfection of his legal masterpiece, tried to enlist the co-operation of the Grand Inquisitor of France himself, Jean Graverent; but that august personage was busy with another case and refused. The bishop was forced to turn to Graverent's vicar for the diocese of Rouen, Jean le Maître, a Dominican friar of retiring disposition, yet even there he ran into difficulties. Le Maître was not anxious for the job and tried to beg off on the ground that he had no authority to hear a cause that properly belonged to the diocese of Beauvais. Cauchon was forced to turn back to Graverent and ask him to equip his meticulous subordinate with additional credentials. By the time these technicalities could be straightened out the trial was in its fourth week, with the vicar of the Inquisition lending to it no more than his non-committal presence.

The body of assessors was one of the largest ever summoned to an ecclesiastical trial—seventy-one in all lent Cauchon the benefit of their knowledge and experi-

ence. Not all of them came willingly, by any means. Some frankly disapproved of the trial and said so; they had to be induced to come by reminders of past obligations and of future favours that might be withheld. Others were reluctant to participate for fear of reprisals in case Joan's king should ever return to power, and Henry VI's Council had to issue letters promising to indemnify them if that happened. The English had also to be generous in the matter of fees, but there was nevertheless discontent because they were withheld till after the verdict, thus giving them an unpleasant air of contingency. In one way or another, however, the court was got together, and Cauchon could contemplate with satisfaction both its number and quality.

Under the appearance of diversity it was a singularly homogeneous body. There were professors of theology, doctors of law and medicine, practising priests and heads of monastic foundations, but they were all churchmen. Ten belonged to the Faculty of the University of Paris, twenty-two to the chapter of Rouen, the rest came from various places, but on most of them—including all who mattered—was the stamp of the Sorbonne. Since the University had been unable to bring the trial to Paris, it had, to all intents and purposes, transferred itself to Rouen. Amongst its sons present were men whom it had sent to Constance and would shortly send to Basle to rewrite the constitution of Christendom—members of the small clique which in that age was more important than the pope and the college of cardinals put together. And, as always happens with large committees, those men of outstanding ability would emerge to give the trial its direction and character and lead the rest after them by the mystic bond of *esprit de corps*.

The spirit of co-operation was not neglected in the choice of officials. For Promoter, or prosecutor, Cauchon selected Jean d'Estivet, one of his canons at Beauvais, who had filled the post for him in the past with satisfactory severity. The Counsellor, entrusted with the duty of collecting the preliminary evidence and putting it into shape, was Jean de la Fontaine, a clerk of the diocese of Bayeux—where, by a coincidence, Estivet was also a canon. The *huissier*, a sort of sheriff's officer to carry out the orders of the judges—his principal duty was to escort the prisoner from her cell and back again—was Jean Massieu, holder of a minor priestly office in Rouen, who owed his appointment to the fact that he was Estivet's clerk. Massieu was to get himself into trouble by showing too much sympathy for Joan: but then he was a bad hat who had already twice been in trouble with his superiors, once for "loose talk" and once for extra-confessional relations with a woman. In addition two priests of Rouen, Guillaume Colles and Guillaume Manchon, were appointed as scribes to take down and prepare the verbatim transcript of the proceedings: they are the true historians of Joan of Arc.

On Wednesday, February 21st, at eight o'clock in the morning, the first public sitting of the court was held in the Chapel Royal of the castle at Rouen. Forty assessors were ranged in carved stalls at Cauchon's either hand—tonsured, clean-shaven, the predominant colour of their robes black with here and there a splash of white on the gown of a member of the Preaching Orders. Cauchon recited the history of Joan's capture and purchase, and presented the documents proving his jurisdiction. The promoter Estivet raised an objection

to Joan being allowed to hear Mass, as she had requested, so long as she persisted in wearing her man's clothing. While the point was being discussed the rattle of chains was heard on the stone flagging outside the door, and he stopped. An instant later Massieu led his prisoner up the aisle and left her—a pale and disreputable figure in the decorous light of the stained glass windows—standing for the first time face to face with her judges.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRIAL

CAUCHON, an imposing figure in scarlet edged with filigree of gold, motioned her to be seated and began to address her. Scarcely had he opened his lips when an uproar broke out like the howling of a pack of wild animals. The spectators (admitted by favour of the English) pushed against the retaining sentries with the familiar screams of "devil's milkmaid" and "Armagnac whore." Some of the assessors even forgot their dignity and joined in the clamour . . . but most turned their faces away with a shudder of horror, for it was one thing to imagine and another to see. . . . All their lives they had been fighting the devil's snare in woman . . . and there she sat with her breasts pressing against the tightly-laced tunic, her fettered legs flung carelessly in front of her, the opening between tunic and hose revealing the flesh of her thighs as far as the sketchy strip of linen that was no more than a *cache-sexe*. The two scribes at the table below the dais dropped their quills and looked at each other in horrified consternation: for they were timid, scrupulous little men both, who told long years afterward that they had never beheld anything like such a scene in a court of law in all their wide experience.

The only tranquil person in the whole of the crowded chapel was the prisoner, sitting on a low bench in front



of the scribes. Indifferent to the din, she repeated to herself the admonition of the Voices, given to her that very morning when she woke out of her sleep and sat on her bed with clasped hands praying for help to meet her ordeal: "Answer boldly and God will sustain you." Not once but several times they had assured her that she would be delivered in triumph, though whether by her friends' exertions or her own they had not clearly stated. God had promised and He had never yet failed her. He had silenced the sceptics who would have thwarted her mission and blunted the arrows of her enemies: she could abide the event with a serene heart.

When the tumult had died down, Cauchon summoned Joan "charitably, as is the duty of our office" to swear that she would answer the whole truth to all questions put to her.

Calmly the girl replied, "I don't know what you are going to ask me. Perhaps you will inquire into things about which I may not want to tell you."

There was no formal accusation against her; she was merely a suspected person who had been dragged here in the hope that she would supply her accusers with what they needed to condemn her. But several hundred years were to pass before the conscience of civilized men would admit the outrage of compelling people to damn themselves out of their own mouths. Cauchon, with a shade less of charity, demanded if she would do as she was told.

"No," she answered, "I will freely tell you whatever you wish to know about my father and mother and what I have done since I took the road to France. But the things God has revealed to me I will tell to no one

except Charles my king, even if you were to cut my head off."

Cauchon tried again several times, without success. Finally he was compelled, in order to get on, to allow her to take the oath in the only form to which she would agree: she would answer questions regarding matters of faith but reserved the right to refuse in matters of fact, that is, her personal visions. And the judge of what was faith and what fact was to be herself.

The trial was less than fifteen minutes old and its central issue was already as clear as it would ever be. Had any human being the right to weigh and judge the validity of his own experience, or was that right solely vested in the Universal Church? Joan claimed to know through direct revelation from God what were her duties toward Him and her fellow-men: Cauchon and his fellows maintained that it was beyond the power of any mortal to know what those duties were without the guidance in every instance of the Church's ordained ministers; any step taken without such guidance was likely to, and in her case had, led to deadly sin, since by his nature man is born to error. She offered them the Word of God, and they retorted that it was impossible for her to know that it was the Word of God without prior submission to the trained experts on the subject. Conduct, faith, experience, God: these were all precisely defined by Holy Law, and it was merely her business to inform herself of the relevant definition and act accordingly.

Every question of the many thousands asked Joan during the trial was intended to show that she had said, done or believed something that was in one way or another in conflict with the Holy Law. Every answer

that she made was an assertion that she knew nothing about the Law and could not be made to accept it where it disputed the evidence of the divine Word transmitted to her through her own senses. That was the reason for her refusal of the oath; that is the key to the whole trial, and the only key. That is why her answers seem to our modern minds simply the plainest common sense, whatever we think of her belief in the Voices, whereas the judges' questions strike us as a farrago of nonsense, which they were not. It is merely that in the girl we can perceive a rational intelligence that rises above the changeable idiom of the time, whereas the crimes of which her judges accused her were born of a style of thought that lies buried under five centuries of putrefied metaphysics.

It may be as unfair to the judges as they were unfair to Joan to see the trial through her eyes, but it is the only way that in our time we can see it: to judge for ourselves is inevitably, automatically, to put ourselves in her position. For the penalty of acting by a system of rules is that the reason behind the rules will be forgotten, while the intelligence that they sought to bind is in itself reason: and the great merit of intelligence is that it for ever remains intelligible. And so Joan's judges, in trying to measure her mind by their standards, achieved the ironical result of making their standards comprehensible to us only through the measure of her mind.

If Cauchon had chosen he could have stopped the proceedings then and there and ordered the executioner to make ready the stake. For nothing that he could prove against Joan in more than a score of racking examinations would ever make her guiltier than she was

at that moment. But the trial had to go on because the English who owned her and the court which tried her could not afford to rest before she and Charles VII had been exposed in their joint iniquity. And so Cauchon spared her a petty martyrdom to give her a greater, and allowed his masterpiece to become her monument.

Only a few minutes were left of the session after the conflict over the oath when common sense and the rules met in another head-on collision. Before Joan was led away to the company of the merry lads in her cell Cauchon sternly warned her against any attempt to escape.

Joan retorted, "Of course I shall try to escape if I get the chance; it is any prisoner's right." She reminded the bishop that she had given her parole to no man—a valid argument of chivalry in a civil court—and pointed out that there was no need to threaten her with punishment for escape while he hung irons all over her.

The assessors stared at one another in horror, and some of them looked down on her with pity. The culprit was apparently ignorant of the decree that made even the wish to be free of the custody of the Church a crime. Cauchon enlightened her and warned her of the penalties, but without impressing her in the slightest. "Do you believe that you have permission of God and your Voices to leave prison whenever you like?" they finally asked her.

"Yes, if I saw the door open I should go, and that would be God's permission."

They could not believe their ears and asked her to repeat it. "I firmly believe that if the door were open and my keeper couldn't stop me, I should understand that God had sent me help; but without His permission

I shouldn't go; and if I went on His enterprise, I should know that He would be pleased." And she added the familiar proverb, "God helps those who help themselves," as she had previously done to the sceptics at Poitiers. "I tell you that," she added, "so that in case I do escape you won't say it was without permission."

To prevent further outbreaks like that morning's the next day's session and the four that followed were held in a small chamber of state adjacent to the royal apartments across the courtyard of the castle, with sentries at the door to keep out the mob. When the bishop took his seat at eight o'clock forty-eight assessors had already been noted as present by the scribes, including the inquisitor le Maître, who again explained that his conscience would not allow him to do more than look on till his papers were in order.

The examinations on that morning and the two succeeding ones were conducted by Jean Beaupère, one of the small committee among the assessors—Loiseleur, Nicolas Midi, Thomas de Courcelles, Pierre Maurice, Jacques de Touraine and two or three others—selected by Cauchon to help him in the management of the trial and in the course of it to play principal rôles. Beaupère was fifty-one, a former rector and ex-acting Chancellor of the University of Paris, canon (not very surprisingly) of Beauvais and various other places, and so eminent a diplomat as well as theologian that no important Council of Church or State for over thirty years was complete without his presence. By strict canonical rule he had no business holding sacred office at all, for he was maimed in the right hand as the result of a murderous assault by highwaymen eight years

earlier, but his friend Pope Martin V had obligingly removed the disability by papal dispensation.

He was the most dangerous kind of advocate Joan could have faced, cunning and enormously experienced both in the law and in the complexities of the human heart. He was one of the few men present at the trial who could weigh its strengths and weaknesses without fanaticism, yet one of the only two who had the courage to defend it at the Rehabilitation. Any of Cauchon's professional witch-hunters could have burned Joan for not talking; it took a master to make her burn herself by talking.

As if he were her own friendly counsel, he led her through the story of her early life at Domrémy, touching only what was simple and innocent in appearance, never venturing the least doubt of anything she said: Manchon's busy quill took down everything so that the lapses could be established later. And so by natural progression they came to the Voices, which were the root of the whole matter. The assessors leaned forward, a hundred questions and crushing objections on the lips of each. Beaupère, without the slightest change of expression, heard her describe how the first vision came to her at noon in her father's garden, and how she was afraid until she knew that it was an angel. Presently he inquired, "What form did the angel assume?" and his colleagues held their breath, for the first trap had been set.

Behind that question lay—nearly everything. A whole series of high dogmatic pronouncements, dating back to one or other of the great church councils, defined minutely the form under which mortals might expect to receive heavenly visitations. If Joan could not satisfy

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the court that her angel had appeared in any of the approved shapes she convicted herself of one of three cardinal sins: fraud, for having invented the visions to deceive the innocent; sorcery, for having knowingly trafficked with infernal spirits; or presumption, if she had entertained the Voices without informing herself through her ghostly advisers of their true nature. And conviction of any one of the three involved Charles VII as her accomplice or her gull.

Any ordinary woolly-headed ecstatic would have hung herself a dozen times over with that much rope; one of Brother Richard's followers, La Pierronne, a poor little Bretonne, had been executed in Paris the previous September for persisting that she had seen God in a scarlet cloak and a long white robe. (She did not help her case by defending Joan's vision at the same time.) But Joan's brains were made of other stuff. She had never attempted to describe the appearance of her Voices for the excellent reason that she knew it was impossible. The experience was hers alone, unique in kind and given to her, "a simple maid," by God for His inscrutable purposes; to attempt to translate it into familiar physical images for the benefit of others was merely to raise or strengthen their doubts. What she had refused to the friendly jury at Poitiers, to her chaplain Pasquerel and to her faithful squire d'Aulon she would not give to her enemies: "Pass on," she commanded, "you shall not have that from me now."

For a moment there was bedlam. Most of the assessors rose from their seats and howled that she must be made to answer. She stared back at them disdainfully, while Cauchon and Beaupère exchanged a quick glance. They understood each other, those two; the bishop

angrily ordered his assistants to resume their places and hold their tongues. The last thing he wanted was to antagonize or frighten the girl so that she would refuse to talk.

For over an hour there was quiet as Joan recounted in matter-of-fact tones her adventures between leaving Domrémy and coming to Chinon, until . . . "and after dinner I went to the king, who was in his castle. When I entered the presence chamber I recognized him from the others through the guidance of my Counsel, and I told him that I wanted to make war against the English."

She had made a slip, since the king had refused to see her for several days, and Beaupère knew it, but he was not bothering with trivialities. As if earnestly trying to fix the scene in his mind he asked, "When the Voice pointed out the king, was there light (the celestial radiance she had mentioned earlier) in the room?"

For a moment the man in the robe and the girl in tunic and hose studied each other—even now one feels that one could have heard a pin drop in that room. In the brief lying under Beaupère's sound left hand was evidence, pieced together from many morsels of gossip, that Joan and the Dauphin between them had cooked up a fraudulent sign to convince the public of the divine origin of her mission. Just what form the sign had taken he did not know, except that it had to do with an angel and a crown, but he intended to find out, for it would be child's play to expose it. The sign was the political crux of the trial as the Voices were the touchstone of Joan's guilt or innocence.

Unfortunately for the prosecution, she knew it. By some incredible flair she suspected the drift of questions almost before they were uttered—already on that day



some of the judges began to suspect that a supernatural power must be prompting her answers, as the soldiers had once been convinced that a similar agency was directing her sword. From first to last she steadfastly refused to discuss the sign given at Chinon,<sup>1</sup> because it was bound up with her Voices, and her Voices must not be allowed to touch the honour of Charles VII. For one so dazzled by the reality of God she had a remarkably sure sense of the realities of the world: she knew that the Voices could be impeached in the eyes of men and so taint the cause of France, which was just and must triumph whether she lived or died. When she stood in sight of the scaffold, prepared to admit almost anything about herself, she still maintained that "my king had no share in me." What she had declined to divulge to the priests who stood between her and her mission she would scarcely confide in priests who were also renegades to their country. Again she refused to answer.

And again there was an uproar, more violent than the first, while Beaupère stood fingering his brief. As soon as it had subsided he was ready with his next question, put with rather less benignity, "Was there an angel above the king's head?"

"Leave that and pass on," she directed crisply. Then, as if to console him or justify herself while justifying Charles, she added, "Before the king decided to use me he had several very lovely revelations about me."

"What sort of revelations?" demanded the interrogator quickly.

It may be that she was teasing him after all—she did

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter IV. Her obstinacy now almost confirms the tradition that the sign had to do with Charles's own doubts of his legitimacy, which she could not reveal to his enemies.

a good deal of it to those solemn churchmen before the trial was over—for she responded, “I shan’t tell you. You’ll get no other answer from me, but send to the king and perhaps he’ll tell you.”

But Beaupère was not to be side-tracked this time. Did those of her party know that the Voice had been sent to her by God . . . had they seen the Voice . . . and finally Joan, only anxious to put him off, and excusing herself to herself on the ground that she had not sworn to tell the truth in this matter, spun him a little yarn about the king and several others, including Charles of Bourbon, having seen such an angel. Beaupère, seeing that he had led her into deep waters, smiled to himself and dropped the subject for the moment, for it was noon and time for dinner.

Before adjourning he asked her, “What recompense were you promised by the Voices for your obedience?”

“Only the salvation of my soul.” The answer fell awkwardly upon ears listening for evidence of sorcery or pacts with the devil, but it was quite satisfactory when the auditors recalled the rule concerning schism. If there wasn’t one way, there was another.

When the court reassembled on Saturday the 24th (no sessions were held on Fridays), sixty-two assessors were in their places, the largest number ever to attend. Cauchon demanded that she take the oath “simply and absolutely and without conditions.” She again refused: she told him hotly that he was taking too much on himself; the whole clergy of Rouen and Paris could not condemn her against the right, she had no business there anyhow, and he should “send her back to God whence she came.” The elaborate impartiality of his beautiful trial deceived her no more than had Philip the Good’s

diplomacy, because to both she applied the same simple straightforward tests of motive and conduct. "You say you are my judge," she burst out at him when he tried to interfere in Beaupère's examination a few minutes later; "take care what you do! For I am truly sent by God and you are putting yourself in grave peril."

She seems to have been right: at least the Church which she defied and Cauchon claimed to represent has made her a saint, and only refrained by the use of a judicious charity from calling him a blackguard. The faith in God and the equally mystic modern faith in the selective wisdom of time have this in common, that truth is mighty and shall prevail, while falsehood must from its very nature perish. At least the converse is something that neither sceptic nor believer finds it easy to face. . . .

While the bishop and various of his colleagues were trying to browbeat Joan into taking the oath, Master Jean Beaupère stood impassively by and cogitated on how he might turn Joan's obstinacy against her. "When did you last hear the Voices?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Yesterday and to-day."

"What did they tell you?"

"To answer boldly."

"Did they forbid you to answer the questions we put to you?"

It was a cunning snare. If it was the Voices who advised her not to answer they could not be divine, for how could God instruct anybody to oppose His own Church? Whereas if Joan was defying the court of her own will, what was all this talk about doing nothing except by command of the Voices?

Joan saw the dilemma. First she took refuge as usual

in refusing to answer; then, seeing that that in no way let her out of the predicament, she asked for a fortnight's delay in order to consult the Voices further. It was a frequent device of hers when she was in trouble; sometimes she answered later, sometimes not.

Beaupère was reluctant to grant the delay, and Joan deftly flung the ball back at him: "What would you say if it *was* the Voices that had forbidden me?" Since he was a theologian he ought to know the answer.

But Beaupère *was* there to ask, not to answer, questions. "Then it was the Voices?" he insinuated.

"Believe me, it wasn't men," she returned cryptically, and when he would not let the matter rest there she said flatly, "I will tell you no more, except that I believe firmly, as firmly as I believe in the Christian faith and that our Lord saved us from the pains of hell, that my Voices came from God and on His orders."

"Was the Voice that appeared to you (in prison) an angel, did it come directly from God, or is it the voice of a saint?" he pursued.

"It comes from God: and I believe that I may not tell you fully all I know, since I am more afraid of failing my Voices or displeasing them than of not answering you. If you want to know any more I ask you to give me the delay."

"Do you think it would displease God if you were to tell the truth?"

"My Voices told me certain things for the king, not for you."

"Could you make the Voices carry messages to the king from you?" For that would have been sorcery, pure and simple.

"I don't know, unless it were God's will." Check.

"Why doesn't the Voice speak to the king now as well as in your presence?" If she claimed that God could only act through her it was presumption on top of sorcery.

"The Lord can if He will; and I should be very happy if He did."

Presently he was back on the shape of the Voices, but this time she only shook her head, smiled, and asked him in return, "Did you ever hear a saying of children that 'people are sometimes hanged for telling the truth'?" Soberly the scribes noted down that response, and soon Estivet would pick it out to make it the basis of an awful accusation.

And then out of a clear sky Beaupère asked her casually, "Do you consider yourself in a state of grace?"

For the first time some of the assessors raised their voices to protest in the girl's favour. Grace is the supernatural gift of God; no mortal can tell whether he possesses it, and even the Church is unable to tell him, for all the Church can do is to assist him to attain the state. Beaupère had no right to ask the question: he would not have dared answer it himself. If Joan said yes, she committed herself to supreme heresy and presumption; if she said no she confessed to having forfeited her Christian birthright, obtained through the sacrament of baptism, because of mortal sin.

"If I am not," replied the girl quietly, without hesitation, "may God bring me there; if I am, may He keep me there. I should be the unhappiest person on earth if I thought that I were not in His grace."

The assessors who had protested broke into applause, and years later recalled that the session had ended on the excitement created by that "most Christian answer."

Their memories were in error, however, for Cauchon impatiently commanded silence to let his spokesman go on. They were at last getting down to something of major importance: Joan's appalling heresy in believing that she was the judge not only of her own conduct but of her own salvation without the intervention of the Church.

"And you believe the Voices when they assure you that you are free of sin?" prompted Beaupère.

"I believe that if I were not they would not come to me, and I wish that every mortal heard them as well as I."

It was enough: this ignorant peasant setting her private fantasies above the institution established to judge the souls of all the living and dead and those yet to be born. Beaupère abruptly dropped the subject and skimmed through her childish quarrels with the Burgundian infants on the banks of the Meuse in order to show later that the Voices had early led her into bloodthirsty courses through an excess of erroneous political zeal, before coming to her first dabblings in witchcraft in Domrémy.

He asked her about the Fairy Tree and the Fountain—had she heard that people ill of fever bathed in the waters of the Fountain to recover their health? Yes. Had they recovered it? "I don't know whether they did or not. Yes, I have heard it said that when they were better they went to make merry under the tree." And in answer to another question she admitted that she had gone there with the other children to weave chaplets of flowers for Our Lady of Domrémy.

"Have you ever heard of the ladies called fairies who were seen there?"

"I've heard of them from the elders, though not of my own family. And I was told that my godmother Jeanne, wife of the mayor, had seen them, but I don't know whether it's true or not."

And so on and so on. She talked freely, with a wistful candour, of those familiar haunts and pastimes of her childhood, but it soon became evident to all but the dullest intelligences in the room that she had nothing whatever to conceal. The simple practices of her infancy were nothing more than the folk-lore of the country: if they wanted to convict her of magic on that score they might as well set up tribunals to prosecute the entire rustic population of Europe. Half the assessors would have failed to pass the examination with her serene scepticism. The mandragora? "I took no stock in it, since it seemed to me mere superstition." There would have been more reason to condemn her as a modern agnostic than as a village sorceress.

Beaupère saw it, for like every first-class theologian he understood as well as hated these pagan survivals in the popular mind; and the Church was, after all, the curator of what passed for scientific criticism in that day. "There was more of human intention and natural cause than of the supernatural in her affair," he admitted at the Rehabilitation. Cauchon and his managing committee must have seen it, too, for there is very little reference again in the course of the merciless examinations that followed to Joan having sold herself into an unholy intercourse with the sprites of the Fairy Tree and the Oak Wood.

No reference, that is, except in Estivet's massive indictment of seventy articles, presented after the testimony had been taken. But that was another matter.

The English had to be satisfied: it mattered little to Bedford whether Joan loved the Church or not, though he occasionally burned a Lollard at home as a sop to the orthodox conscience, but it mattered a great deal to him that the French public and his own soldiers should attribute his recent defeats to the devil's malevolence and not God's displeasure. It was to establish that distinction that he had spent his good Norman subjects' ten thousand pounds; and so the Promoter was permitted to throw in anything that looked like giving the Regent his money's worth.

She made one rather curious answer before the topic was dropped for the day. "Was there not a prophecy that from the Oak Wood would come a girl to perform marvels?" asked Beaupère.

"People asked me about it when I was going to the king," she replied, "but I placed no faith in it." Several witnesses at the Rehabilitation declared that they heard the prophecy from her own lips—could she have deliberately exploited it, with her eyes open, to get help for her mission?

The hearing was adjourned to the following Tuesday. On that morning Beaupère showed with almost his first question what a master of the art of cross-examination he was. On the Saturday he had evidently noticed the first sign of doubt or distress in Joan. Some expression had crossed her face which revealed to his keen eyes that she knew she could not go on for ever refusing to answer, some sign that she was finding the burden of alert suspicion too much against that phalanx of "venerable and learned doctors" with their huge volumes of undisclosed testimony on everything she had ever said or done. They had been questioning her



for ten hours; it seemed like a lifetime, but there was nothing to stop them from going on for a thousand more. . . . "Didn't you hear your Voice in this room on Saturday?" asked Beaupère. It was a shrewd way of putting it.

Startled, she said quickly, "That's nothing to do with your trial," but his experienced ear detected uncertainty in her defiance and he tried again, until she admitted that she had.

"What did it say?"

She had not heard very well, she said, but on her return to her cell she had asked the Voices to speak to her again (that Beaupère knew too, for her every movement was spied upon) and they, understanding her predicament, had given permission for her to tell more than she had so far, provided only she did not implicate the king. And on that basis Beaupère wormed out of her the identity of the Voices "crowned with lovely crowns, rich and precious," of the archangel Michael and of Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret. It was a long duel interrupted with many sharp refusals to answer on her part, and he was unable to get her to commit herself on the physical shapes of the Voices, in order to compare them with canonical specifications, but those details could be filled in later.

She saw that she was giving too much away, and tried to help herself by interposing the interrogatory at Poitiers between her and Beaupère's steady stream of questions: "Go and see the register at Poitiers," she told him over and over, or, "It is all written down at Poitiers." It was a justifiable dodge to set off her triumph with one lot of priests to mitigate the torment from another, and an artful one. Too artful, for the court

knew more about that first examination than she dreamed, and a good deal more than we shall ever find out: presently they would turn about and offer to allow her the benefits, such as they were, of the register at Poitiers, and she would have to refuse them. In any event Cauchon and his assessors would naturally have no respect for the Armagnac clerics who had accepted Joan's visions—it was all too clear that *they* had been guilty of dragging politics into religion.

Hither and thither darted Master Beaupère, drawing forth answers that seem to us the merest good sense and yet made the Promoter Estivet run his tongue along his upper lip when he lifted them out of the transcript. The clothes, those obnoxious garments that only the devil, who had no respect for female decency, could have made her take? "The clothes are a little thing, the least. I needed them to carry out my work and to live modestly amongst the soldiers." Why had she not consented to grant a truce to Suffolk at Jargeau when he asked for it—an action obviously conducive to bloodshed? Because she and the other captains were afraid that reinforcements were on the way to him and the place would be lost. And scattered through the interrogatory are the little phrases that struck the auditors as evasions and seem to us charming little parables, as when she was asked again about the celestial light that accompanied the Voices and answered, "Of course there was much light, as is suitable—but *all the light was not meant for me alone.*"

Beaupère ran over her military career, stepping gingerly so as not to stress her victories, it being the prosecution's theory that those were a kind of beginner's luck with which the devil had tempted her before

mocking her with defeat, as was his satanical way. Two proofs of the fact that the victories were impiously gained were her banner and her sword. The prosecution believed that she had planted the sword herself at Fierbois with intent to deceive, but Beaupère did not mention the suspicion, since he wanted her to admit that she had invoked divine blessing on an object intended for killing, as a form of blasphemous incantation. She denied the charge. "But didn't you have prayers recited over it to bring you luck?" he persisted.

"Naturally I wanted my arms to be lucky," she retorted. If that were a sin the Church would have had to excommunicate the armies of Crusaders it had sent out with its blessing.

The same suspicions were behind the questions regarding the banner. What did the image of God and the words JHESUS MARIA mean? Had she had holy water sprinkled on the standard? On the material of which it was made? (The last two questions were asked later.) Wearily she denied the sprinklings and defended the images and the words on the ground that God had commanded them. As an interesting footnote to the accusation of bloodshed she added, "I carried the banner myself when charging my adversaries in order to avoid killing anyone; I have never killed a man." The statement is borne out by those who fought at her side.

It is only at a later stage of the interrogatory that the full thought of the judges came out:

"Had you asked your Voices if, by virtue of the standard, you might win all the battles you took part in?"

"They told me to take it boldly and God would help me."

"Did you help the standard more than it helped you or vice versa?"

"It or me, it was all God's."

"Was your hope of victory founded on it or on yourself?"

"On God and nothing else."

"Had anyone else carried it, would it have brought the same luck as to you?"

"I don't know; that's God's affair."

If anything emerges from these questions and answers it is that whatever of superstition or blasphemy were in the business were not Joan's. She was being tried not for what she believed but for what other people believed of her; not for what she had done, but for what a marvelous public, which sought for the supernatural in every remarkable event, thought her capable of doing. The Church was again fighting, what it had so often and so bravely fought before, the dark mass of pagan survivals in the mind of the Middle Ages; but unluckily she was doing it through churchmen interested in the result, against the person of a defendant whose only offence before her capture was that she inflamed the imagination of the mob and in so doing inflicted injury on her judges. Even the fifteenth century came to see that.

Master Beaupère had finished digging his pitfalls and retired; it remained for more brutal hands to try and thrust her in. One rather misses him during the last two general sessions, held in the State Chamber on March 1st and 3rd. His thought was usually clear; the direction of his interrogatories followed in a general way the chronology of Joan's life. Thereafter it is impossible to say who is conducting the examination and difficult to discover what he is after. Cauchon began but it is

plain that he often gave way to others, for the witnesses at the Rehabilitation tell how the assessors, no longer able to contain themselves, poured in questions from all sides, to satisfy their curiosity, to show their cleverness in inventing posers, to get rid of stored-up spite.

There is no pattern whatever, merely threads of different lengths broken off at the whim of the court, or, not infrequently, by the silence of the defendant. Why had she told the Count of Armagnac that she would advise him later who was the true Pope—did she really mean to say that the King of Kings would confide in her whom the Count should accept as Christ's true Vicar? Had she not prophesied that God had assured her that the English must lose? The Voices again and what they looked like; had they gold rings in their hair and—by the way, what had she meant by the cross and the Jhesus Maria engraved on her ring and put in her letters? Had the Voices promised her delivery from prison? The sign; her clothes; the banner again. Had she not faked an aureole and worn it at Jargeau? And the butterflies round her banner at Chateau Thierry? Why had she let people adore her? What about the dead baby revived, the fornicating priest unmasked, the lost gloves found? Catherine de la Rochelle? Why did she throw holy water in the moat at La Charité, and why had she failed there if she went by God's command? Why had she jumped at Beaurevoir? Or cursed at Soissons?

Behind every question was a variety of dogmatic subtleties, latent in each answer the confession to a variety of esoteric sins. The intention was to confuse an untaught girl—it did not need the admission of the witnesses at the Rehabilitation to make that plain—and

the wonder is how little it succeeded. The one element in all that chaos that is straightforward, consistent, is the mind and character of Joan as she adjusted herself to confront the bewildering complexities fired at her by those fifty-odd tongues.

She had been hasty and ill advised in her answer to the Count of Armagnac, but her first answer should have let her off. "What did you mean by what you said regarding who is the true Pope," demanded Cauchon, and she answered in surprise, "Are there two?" She had never questioned it, but when Pasquerel had given her that unfortunate letter to sign, as she was leaping into the saddle, she had told him to say she would answer later and his clerical language had let her in for another sin of presumption, soon to be duly noted in Estivet's indictment.

The miracles—the gloves, the priest, the dead baby—she simply denied; the last of the three is the only one we know about in detail, where her sole fault was that the people of Lagny rated her prayer higher than those of the other virgins of the city. The aureole she also denied, and flatly accused her enemies of having invented the butterfly yarn; unluckily there was a certain substance to it, since a similar swarm had been seen when the morning sun tipped the fringes of her standard the day that Troyes surrendered. Yes, she had said that the English would be driven out in seven years: she knew it as well as that the bishop sat before her, though she could not name the day or hour; she only wished it were soon.<sup>1</sup> She had sometimes put Jhesus Maria on

<sup>1</sup> The English were not expelled from Normandy until the 1450's, but the fall of Paris and the reconciliation of Charles VII and Philip the Good, which made the ultimate victory inevitable, took place within five years.

her letters, but only for reasons of piety—like a million other Christians of the time; it had no other reason. The cross? She sometimes put it in as a private sign to her correspondent *not* to do what the letter said—a bit of juvenile cipher which (it seems) was blasphemy. Her ring had been given to her already engraved by her mother. Why had she looked at it before going into battle? In memory of the giver, whom she loved. The Burgundians had it now—another, from her brother, Cauchon had confiscated and she asked him to give it back to her, but he refused to surrender the little circle of brass, for who knew what magic she might not work with it? Brother Richard and Catherine de la Rochelle she admitted knowing, but with a certain humour that apparently disconcerted the judges, for they quickly tired of those pestilential creatures.

Somehow the tighter closed the net the keener grew her wit and the less could she stifle the laughter that strangely bubbled inside her during the solemn proceedings. Cauchon, mindful of the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and subsequent pronouncements to the effect that angels appear in corporal form but that it is not in their nature to have bodies, asked her how the Voices could speak to her if they lacked members. Joan, who had never heard of the Fourth Lateran Council, couldn't say; all she could vouch for was that she had heard them and that their speech was gentle and sweet—and, of course, French.

"Didn't Saint Margaret speak English?" inquired the bishop, for some unfathomable purpose of his own.

"Why should she," asked Joan demurely in return, "when she is not of the English faction?" But the judges saw nothing funny in it; Joan's Voice was evidently

a bloodthirsty demon who took sides like the heathen gods in the Trojan War—and the wrong side.

Later Cauchon, hoping to prove that the prisoner had entertained salacious visions—a most unholy act for a Maid—tried to find out how the archangel Michael was dressed. Joan didn't know. "Was he naked?" asked the bishop intently.

Again the question was answered with a question. "Don't you think that Our Lord can afford to clothe him?"

Cauchon didn't like that; down it went for Master Estivet's use. "Had he hair?" he snapped.

"Why should it be cut?" returned the astonishing girl. As with Beaupère, so with his superior: they were theologians, she wasn't, and it was they who ought to know the answers given in the book.

So rapidly were the questions hurled at her and so cunningly framed to trap her that the better-hearted of the assessors at times were moved to protest; whether Cauchon intervened or not is impossible to say, though when he supervised the edition of the trial he was careful to iron out all evidences that his assessors had not pulled together as one large happy family. "One at a time, please, gentlemen," Joan would sometimes call out breathlessly when all were shouting at her together. Even the two experienced scribes got lost and would mark *Nota* beside certain questions as a reminder to have them asked over again. On one of these occasions Joan maintained that she had already been asked about a certain matter. The scribe denied it. She asked him to turn back the pages of his record to the relevant date. He did so and sheepishly admitted that she was right. She called to him "merrily" across the table, "If I



catch you out in another mistake I'll pull your ear." He grinned—and took the wages they paid him for his work in the trial to buy a missal in her memory when she was dead.

A quite satisfactory number of men and women have stood trial for their lives with courage; a good few have done so displaying a high order of intelligence; it is hard to think of anyone but Socrates and Joan of Arc who did so with gay humour. As one lights upon these flashes of laughter in Cauchon's too-tidy, sombre masterpiece one cannot help thinking that the chroniclers and the witnesses at the Rehabilitation conspired to wrong the girl. They make her so earnest in trying to make her too good and a little bumptious in trying always to make her right. But then the chroniclers were dull dogs, paid hacks whose labours lay dismally on their souls. Says Jean Chartier, who was entrusted by Charles VII with recording the events of his reign, in his opening invocation:

"My language and style are those of an infant, but they will show the events as truly and diligently as possible, having in mind rather to obey the king than to favour the vanities of this world."

So to flatter the king he made Joan a plaster saint and a bit of a prig whom God had sent him in his need; the witnesses at the Rehabilitation were occupied with exactly the same design; and the chroniclers drew for their facts largely on the witnesses. Joan had to rely on the conscientious pens of her enemy's scribes to acquit her of the pious slanders of her friends and let her be seen as she was.

There was a recess of a week until the 10th of March

whilst Cauchon and the managing committee considered the testimony so far taken and decided on the points for further questioning. The "venerable and discreet person" Master Jean de la Fontaine was delegated to continue the interrogatories in Joan's cell, in the presence of from three to five assessors at a time, and one scribe, the bishop excusing himself on the ground of "our diverse occupations," though actually he was frequently present. The rest of the assessors were told to remain in Rouen on pain of having their allowances stopped—a welcome breathing spell to many of them who lived in or near the town and were only too glad of a chance to look after their ordinary duties in church and monastery.

It would be interesting to know what the Reverend Father in Christ thought of his beautiful trial at that stage, but he left no comment and one can only infer his opinion from his conduct and the way that la Fontaine carried out his instructions for the second series of interrogatories. It is obvious that things were not shaping altogether satisfactorily, for observers agree that the bishop was in a mood far from sunny or even Christian. The English authorities were harrying him to get on with it—what was the purpose of dallying about all winter when the defendant positively reeked of sulphur and brimstone? Cauchon cursed them under his breath for insular blockheads; he knew only too well that the evidence against Joan was as yet little more than the "rumour" on which they had arrested her. They might burn her for the contumacy she had committed in refusing to take the oath: but what did contumacy matter to a public that didn't know what it meant and were probably unable to pronounce it? And it was the

public that had to be satisfied. Moreover, he knew that even had he been willing to come to a verdict then, he would have had trouble with his assessors, who were by no means all tractable.

One of them, Nicolas de Houpeville, Master of Arts and Bachelor of Theology, he had had to lock up for saying that there was danger in going on with the trial since they were all of the party hostile to Joan and she had already been examined by the priests of her own party. Several of the assessors advised sending this troublesome colleague to England as a punishment, but one of the most powerful ones, Gilles Duremort, Abbot of Fécamp, got him off, though he was not allowed to attend the trial again. Another, "a notable Norman cleric," Jean Lohier, told Cauchon frankly that the trial was invalid, since the court was not at full liberty and various persons were affected, particularly Charles VII, who were neither present nor represented. Lohier then left Rouen under threat and went to Rome, where he died Dean of the Rota. Others were unmistakably anxious to be excused.

The impression being made by the culprit's personality and her responses were also disconcerting. Every now and then the examinations would be interrupted with cries of "well spoken, Joan." The sentiment was not confined only to the assessors, who were after all of her blood. An English lord present as a spectator exclaimed after one of her answers, "There's a fine woman; what a pity she isn't English." It was the highest, the immemorial tribute of his race, but as a wish it was vain as it was pious—for Joan was French to her finger-tips, as unmistakable a product of its soil as any of the ready-tongued, strong-backed women one can meet to-day on

a hillside in Burgundy during the gathering of the grapes.

She would scarcely have survived without that peasant's endowment, what with the damp airless cell from which she was not allowed to stir all that week, the oafs who manhandled her, and the one meagre and unappetizing meal a day. For the first time in her life she suffered from illness, so that once the trial had to be held up on account of it. In addition she was the victim of a severe attack of ptomaine poisoning brought on through a mistaken kindness on Cauchon's part. He sent her a fish—the season was Lent—but it had not been selected with sufficient care. The English were in a panic: the Earl of Warwick rushed two doctors to her bedside, insisting that she must be cured because “the king doesn't want for anything on earth that she should die a natural death; he holds her dear, having paid dearly for her and intends that she shall perish only through justice.” A protracted course of bleeding and an attack of vomiting presently relieved the nine-year-old monarch's anxiety.

The hearings in the prison began on the morning of March 10th and ended on Palm Sunday, the 25th; on the 13th the Inquisitor le Maitre finally joined in his official capacity, but left most of the questioning to others. Eleven examinations, of from two to three hours each, were held in those fifteen days, some of them being carried over into the afternoon. The deadly atmosphere of the cell, the persistent questioning, her physical weakness and constant ill-treatment were all beginning to have their effect on Joan, and la Fontaine, covering much the same ground as Beaupère and Cauchon, was to succeed in making her talk where

they had failed, though he was a less clever man and a kindlier one.

Almost the first thing he asked her was about the sign. For three days she held him off with defiance and irony—"What did you do when the sign appeared?" asked la Fontaine, and she answered, "I thanked God for delivering me from the clerk's arguments." But her resistance grew feebler; one of the scribes overheard her murmuring pathetically to herself when she saw that she was giving way, "I promise to speak of it to no man more," like a child reminding itself that it must be strong. Yet she pulled herself together sufficiently to divert her tormentors without revealing whatever secret she had of the king's. She saw that they wanted to hear about an angel and a crown so, deftly adapting her answers to their questions, she wove them a little allegory round those two objects in the hope of satisfying them. It was a dangerous venture for a young girl against experienced lawyers: it was also a lie, but she had no compunction in telling it since she had openly declared that she would never tell the truth on that subject.

When she was with the Dauphin in the audience-chamber at Chinon (she said), an angel entered (later identified as Michael—and still later in the company of the heavenly host) bearing a crown. She knelt and took off her hat, while the angel told the Dauphin to use her for the good of the realm. Later she amended the story and said that she had accompanied the angel up the stairs to the audience-chamber and presented him to Charles, saying, "Sire, here is your sign, receive it." She then went into a nearby chapel to pray and when she came out learned that the angel had, in the presence

of various notables, handed the crown to the Archbishop of Rheims. Alternatively the angel had come to say good-bye to her in the chapel and she wept at his going.

The crown was a symbol, of course, of the coronation at Rheims and the angel of herself: her sign was what she had accomplished, precisely as the raising of the siege of Orleans was the sign she offered to the other priests at Poitiers. The fable was utterly transparent, as she meant it to be, for she gave the clearest hints—"the crown was still in the royal treasury," etc.—but the judges, seeing that she would not tell the truth, pounced upon her as if she had been guilty of the most devilish lie. They wanted to know where the angel had obtained the crown, how the king knew it was an angel, ("By the science of the churchmen present," she answered ironically), whether it glistened, whether it smelled good. . . . To this last question she answered with one of the little parables of which she was so fond: "It smells good and will smell good, so long as it is well guarded." The words are like an echo of that other and lovelier parable on the same subject, "It will last a thousand years, so long as justice shall prevail in the realm." No wonder her contemporaries compared her with the defendant in another trial that had taken place almost exactly fourteen hundred years earlier.

It was the biggest stride the prosecution had yet taken. If they had not discovered the truth about the sign they had extorted a tale that, if properly presented, could easily prove her a liar and a charlatan to the public; for she had naturally had to name the people present in the audience-chamber and had mentioned the Archbishop of Rheims, Tremoille, Alençon and others, few

of whom, the judges well knew, would care to corroborate her story. They were soon to offer to invite them to Rouen, if she so desired, as witnesses to the incident. . . .

Even as she invented her ingenious allegory it was becoming apparent that her watchfulness was diminishing; the slips and discrepancies became more and more glaring as she went on. The examiners had their record and she only her memory; they were many and fresh, she alone and tired. It often became difficult for her to remember what she had admitted and what denied, nor did they of course enlighten her. On the 17th of March, after she had undergone over forty hours of questioning, she finally gave way and told what she knew about the Voices.

She was being asked again why she looked at her ring before going into battle, and replied as before, for love of the mother and father who gave it to her, then added without being asked, as if voluntarily, "And because I touched Saint Catherine with it."

Quickly la Fontaine was on her. "Did you touch and embrace Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret?"

"Yes, both."

"Did they smell good?" This was a common trap for infernal delusions.

"Yes, very."

"When you embraced them did you feel their warmth?" In other words, had they bodies.

"I couldn't very well embrace them without smelling and touching them." Her spirit and her good sense were as yet unaffected.

"Did you embrace them above or below the knees?"

"It seemed more suitable to embrace them below . . .

for I knew well that they came from the the realm of Paradise."

"Did you give them chaplets of flowers?"

"Only to their images in the churches, in their honour."

That was all he got because it was all she knew. The Voices had come to her in her father's garden; she had doubted and been afraid, but they had "greatly comforted" her by responding to her deep spiritual need. They had told her to do certain extraordinary things; obedient to and guided by them she had done those things, though a simple peasant girl—what other proof was needed that the Voices had been sent by God? Later, of course, she had failed to do what she desired, at Paris and La Charité, but what did that signify? Merely that the Voices had not come. "Why did you not take La Charité, since God commanded it," they taunted her, and she answered fiercely, "Who told you I had His command to take it?" Her failures became in retrospect simply those acts which she had undertaken in the company of the captains without inspiration from above. The first reality in her life's errand were the Voices and they were the last—even when the truth dawned on her that they had betrayed her.

That time was still two months distant, though la Fontaine was already carefully planting the seeds of her tragic realization. With intense curiosity he probed her conviction that she was certain to be freed. How? Either by delivery from prison or a great French victory after her sentence. Confidently she told him, when he asked her about the sign, "The sign that you will have is that God will deliver me from your hands, and it is the surest he will give you." Again the practical reality she had offered to the clerks at Poitiers: the clerks at Rouen did not believe so readily. They made her repeat it



countless times, for they were pretty certain of the strength of their prison, and wanted to remind her later.

They trapped her in a variety of ways on that question. They proved, at least to their own satisfaction, that the Voices were infernal because they promised to rescue her from the Holy Church; they also proved, somewhat inconsistently it would seem, that she had sinned by trying to escape from Beaurevoir in direct disobedience of the Voices. In this matter of the leap from the tower they also had her on the charge of attempted suicide, and when she denied that she wanted to kill herself, but could not help jumping because of her great terror of being sold to the English, they hastily noted down that she denied the doctrine of Free Will. Never can the magnificent conception whereby the Catholic Church upholds the dignity of the human soul have been more distorted and degraded.

But these were all technical matters, good enough for filling out Master Estivet's indictment or satisfying captious experts in the future. As the weeks rolled on it became plainer and plainer that the whole mountainous interrogatory was really boiling down to one fundamental question: would Joan submit to the judgment of the court—or, as it was more impressively put, to the Church? She might go on telling lies about signs and things, offend a thousand hoary pronouncements, but as long as she maintained that what she had done was by direct order from heaven her judges could argue themselves black in the face without convincing the French people that it was otherwise. What was the good of proclaiming that she was in a state of sin if she in return proclaimed that God had either directed what she had done or absolved her offences through her Counsel, as at Beaurevoir?

The populace gave quite as much credence to her Voices as to those of the churchmen her judges, if not more. And it was a dangerous business ruling out visions with a high hand: even the ignorant were aware that the Faith owed its being to a rather remarkable succession of visionaries. The only hope of rounding off the masterpiece with a satisfactory flourish was to make Joan submit to the Church and then accept without demur its judgment that she and the Voices were—whatever the court decided they were.

They tried threats, cajolery, bribes, threats again, without avail. She loved the Church, she would rather die than offend in the slightest against the Christian Faith, but “all my acts and deeds are in God’s hands and I count on Him.” She happened to be one of those people who cannot be rigidly fitted into any institution no matter how great; and the Church was not at its greatest in her time. They reminded her of her undoubtedly mortal sins, but she would not admit that they were sins, since she had authority for them. What, demanded la Fontaine, really outraged, was it not a sin to wear the clothes she had on? No, since they were necessary to carry out her mission. Then how about fighting on a Saint’s Day before Paris? “I don’t believe it was a mortal sin, but if so, it is for God to know it and for a priest to confess it.” She left it to God to judge the circumstances, but naturally the churchmen wondered where the Church came in. How could she defend taking a hack belonging to the Bishop of Senlis—commandeering an ecclesiastical animal for military purposes? She had sent an order for payment; if the bishop had not received it, the fault was not hers. Wasn’t it a mortal sin to take Franquet d’Arras to

ransom and then have him killed. She hadn't taken him to ransom, and she gave the reasonable explanation of what she actually had done with the brigand. There is no more exquisite moment of irony in the whole affair than when the judges taxed the girl bought with English gold with having sold her own prisoner to justice.

They knew that she was longing to hear mass, so they dangled that bait before her very cunningly. First they made it clear that she was in a perilous state because she had neglected her religious observances so long! Then they asked her whether she would give up her man's garments if she was allowed to take part in the sacred rites—a concession for an act of submission. What followed sounds like the chaffering in an oriental bazaar.

"Had you rather take women's clothes and hear Mass, or keep men's and not hear it?"

"Certify that I'll hear Mass in women's and I'll answer." Her trust in them was not profound.

"And if I swear to you that you will hear Mass if you take women's?"

"Make me a gown to earth, without a train, a simple gown such as a burgher's wife wears, and give it to me for Mass; on my return I'll resume this."

"Once and for all, will you take women's clothes?"

"I'll consult my Voices and answer you." And there they were at the starting point.

They thought she might be muddled for lack of proper instruction and patiently explained to her the difference between the Church Triumphant in heaven, which consisted of God and His saints, and the Church Militant on earth, which was composed of the Pope, the cardinals,

the priests and the community of Christian souls in general, and in matters of faith was infallible. She caught the distinction well enough and when they told her that her salvation depended on her submission to the Church Militant, she declared straightforwardly that she had been sent by "God, Our Lady and all the blessed saints of Paradise" to help her unhappy country. To them—the Church Victorious she called them—she referred all that she had done. She believed that God and the Church were the same thing, and "why do you make so much difficulty," she demanded of la Fontaine, "about their being identical?" As for her salvation, her Voices had promised her that in the end she would come to Paradise and she was as sure of it as if she were already there.

"What you are saying has very great weight," la Fontaine warned her gravely, after her exposition of this ultimate heresy.

"Also I hold it for a very great treasure," she answered.

What could they do? How could the One Holy Church survive at all if the members of its flock were allowed each individually to secure absolution for their deeds and procure their seats in Paradise through private channels of communication with Heaven? Had Joan's judges been men of the highest and most incorruptible virtue they could not have let her get away with it. They might have swallowed all her other crimes—bloodshed, pride, rich raiment, false prophecies, witchcraft, the whole fantastic brew of suspicions on which they had brought her to trial—and very largely they did: they could not overlook the one crime that had revealed itself after the trial had begun, the crime of which she had convicted herself out of her own mouth.

And from that time on they were apparently more intent on convincing her of her error than on condemning her for her guilt. The one by no means excluded the other. . . .

On Monday, March 26th, Cauchon, le Maitre and a dozen of the more important assessors met at the bishop's house to discuss the second stage of the proceedings. What had taken place so far was considered simply an inquiry; the trial proper was what followed.<sup>1</sup> Estivet presented his indictment in seventy articles, based on the secret preliminary investigations and Joan's answers to date; the defendant was now to have each of the articles read to her in French as a separate accusation, and be deemed to have confessed to all unless she answered under oath.

On the following day she was brought before the two judges and thirty-seven assessors in the Great Hall of the castle and confronted with the formidable list of her crimes—after five weeks of intense questioning she was at last told what she was suspected of. The assessors decided by a majority vote that she should have three days' delay to answer certain charges if she requested it before incurring the penalty of excommunication—and the attentions of the secular arm. Cauchon explained this to her, told her that the learned doctors present were intent on proceeding with her in all piety, "with no thought of vengeance or bodily punishment," and offered her the assistance of counsel from amongst those present, "provided she had the will to tell the truth."

She thanked him and the whole company for their interest in "my welfare and our Faith," but declined the

<sup>1</sup> *Processus Ordinarius post processum factum ex officio.*

offer of counsel since she "had no intention of departing from the counsel of God." The oath she took in her own way as before; and they let her do it.

On that day and the next the articles were read to her by Thomas de Courcelles, one of the leading figures at the trial. Though only thirty-eight years old, he was already one of the foremost theologians alive, and as celebrated for his modesty as for his learning, because he walked from monastery to palace, from palace to church council, with his eyes for ever cast on the ground. He was so modest that he refused a cardinal's hat, though he humbly accepted a rich collection of benefices; so retiring that when he accepted from Cauchon the commission to edit Joan's trial in Latin, he discreetly struck out his own name wherever its appearance might later compromise him—unluckily he forgot to do the same in the French original, and the fragment of it that subsequently turned up reveals some curious omissions, such as the editor's opinion that Joan should be put to torture. At the Rehabilitation he practically forgot that he had been present at the trial at all, and deplored the fuss that had been made without giving an opinion on Joan's guilt one way or the other. He came out of his shell to preach the funeral sermon of Charles VII in 1461, and his eulogy on that occasion of the king he had hated brought tears to all eyes, including Master de Courcelles' own.

The act of accusation preceding the indictment declared that Joan was, amongst other things:

"a sorceress, blasphemer, dabbler in magic, pseudo-prophetess, invoker of demons, superstitious, thinking evil of the Catholic Faith, schismatic, sacrilegious, idolatress, apostate, profane, disturber of the peace

and an obstacle to it, cruelly athirst for human blood, scandalous, seditious, indecent, immodest. . . .”

and various other things a well-brought-up Christian girl should not be. Then followed circumstantial details in the seventy articles, with Joan's answers appended to each: they varied only in trivial details from her original statements, and usually she was content merely to refer back to those.

The articles, with the quotations from Joan's previous responses, run to about 22,000 words—about a fifth of the whole record of the trial. Though their substance is largely that of the seventeen interrogatories that had gone before, Brother Estivet managed to provide a gloss that was peculiarly his own. Wherever the worst possible construction could be put on a statement, he put it; wherever a meaning could be twisted, he twisted it; and wherever a guilty nuance could be found that the examiners themselves had never dreamed of looking for, he found it. Then with a fine professional acumen he managed to multiply most things by three. “The accused did such a thing, she had persisted in doing it, she said that she had done it”—the sin itself, the sin of obduracy, the sin of deluding the innocent.

He made several interesting additions that Cauchon had, so far as one can judge, not intended. The court had not brought up the awkward question of Joan's virginity, being content to suppress the Duchess of Bedford's report and ask certain questions about Joan's clothes and habits that might lead the public to draw its own conclusions. Estivet dug into the anonymous preliminary informations and discovered that Joan had not only been Robert de Baudricourt's mistress but had boasted that she would one day have three children, of whom one would be pope, one emperor and the third

king. "By Jove! then I want to make one of them for you," had been Robert's comment, "he might be of some use to me." Madame la Rousse's hostelry at Neufchateau became a brothel and Joan an inmate. Instead of being sued by the young man at Toul for breach of promise, she had sued him when he refused to marry her on the ground that she was a common prostitute; he died while the suit was pending and Joan left the la Rousse establishment in a huff.

The trouble with Estivet is that he did not know where to stop. Even his employers seemed to feel that he had overdone it. Jean de la Fontaine, who had been responsible for gathering all the preliminary informations from which Estivet's choicest morsels had been culled (and could have used them himself when he questioned Joan in prison had he thought them worth using), quietly disappeared from Rouen a week or so after the reading of the indictment as a protest of disgust against the whole business. When Cauchon and six of the assessors met again in Joan's cell on the 31st to take up the matters on which she had been allowed delay, they brushed aside the promoter's gaudy labours and contented themselves with asking her but one question: would she submit to the Church and accept its decision on the Voices? Again she said she would submit only to God, whose commands she had always sought to obey—yet, instead of carrying out the threat of excommunication, Cauchon merely retired to deliberate further.

He had the seventy articles reduced to twelve comparatively short ones, which in effect boiled down to three—the reality of the Voices, her right to wear men's clothes, her refusal to submit to the Church. The twelve articles were thenceforth treated not only as the



substance of the various accusations but of Joan's answers to each, though she was never shown them: the iniquity of including her "confessions" in a document which she had never heard of seems to have struck no one until a long time later, yet it was on that document that judgment was now asked. And the same author who had embroidered the seventy-headed indictment was appointed by the Bishop to distil out of it its abbreviated successor—so Estivet's labours and his spite were not totally wasted after all.

The twelve articles were first shown to twenty-two of the more assiduous assessors on April 12th in the chapel of the archiepiscopal palace of Rouen. By unanimous vote they held that Joan had failed to prove that her Voices came from God, and that a *prima facie* case of presumption, idolatry and other things "smelling strongly of heresy" had been made out.

The articles were then circulated to several score of theological experts, including the whole chapter of Rouen, eleven members of the local ecclesiastical bar, and two bishops of Normandy: with them went the conclusion of the assessors, obviously in the hope that the recipients would be impressed by the unanimity of twenty-two such good and wise men. Many of them were, and thought there was nothing more to be said. Others, however, thought there was, and said it. Not a few frankly disliked the look of the case. Some recommended that further opinion be sought, from the Pope, from the University, even from chosen prelates of Joan's own party. Some saw no reason why Joan's visions were necessarily offensive to the true doctrine. The general sentiment was well expressed in an opinion written jointly by the two Abbots of Jumièges and Corneilles:

"First, in the matter of submission this woman should be charitably admonished in public, so as to expose to her the danger she is running, and after that legitimate warning she should be reputed suspect in faith if she perseveres in her wrongdoing. As for her revelations, and her wearing of men's clothes, it seems to us at first sight that we cannot believe God is behind them, since there is not sufficient evidence of saintly life or miracles. As for her being in mortal sin, God alone knows, who reads men's hearts. And since there are facts we cannot know, we who have not to judge hidden things, especially as we were not present at the examination of this woman, we can only refer to the masters of theology (of the University) for further judgment."

For enemies who could see evidence neither of saintly life nor miracles in Joan, the two abbots showed themselves singularly humane men: unluckily they, in common with all the rest, placed utter reliance on the "light of all science, the extirpator of error," as a just and infallible last court of appeal.

Cauchon read the answers to his circular and saw that the masterpiece was still incomplete. The facts on which he had relied had not proved so reliable after all: and in the opinion of his advisers there was obvious doubt as to just how the few indisputable facts that remained dovetailed with the Law. If the girl would only submit . . . had ever an inquisitorial court been plagued with so difficult a prisoner . . . and after a trial that had set a record for length and conscientious thoroughness? Even before all the canonical experts consulted had sent in their responses, the bishop saw that he and his assessors alone dared not carry out the

capital sentence. To call in Joan's party was going too far. To send to the Pope was going too far in another sense, the geographical: and why trouble the Pope when Joan was prepared to go no farther than refer His Holiness' judgment to her Voices? <sup>1</sup> The bishop decided to try what kindly exhortation would do to soften Joan's obstinacy, and meantime to send Beaupère, Midi and Jacques de Touraine to Paris to lay his dilemma before Alma Mater. In a world where facts were slippery, men unstable and truth elusive, it was good to know that there was one quiet corner of it where doubt was unknown and consistency glittered like a jewel.

<sup>1</sup> The Chair of Saint Peter was vacant from February to May, but the fact was not known during most of the trial.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE END

To understand Joan's position it is necessary to grasp thoroughly Cauchon's. The inquiry was closed. He had asked the opinion of twenty-two chosen assessors on the merits of the evidence, and they had answered collectively that it looked serious but failed to say that it was conclusive of guilt. He had consulted a large number of other experts by letter, and their advice had been divided and inconclusive. The bishop (with his compliant fellow-judge, the Inquisitor) had the right if he chose to proceed to a verdict immediately, but to do so would have been a crying scandal that he dared not face without the support of the ultimate authority on doctrine, the University of Paris.

But as an ecclesiastical judge he had another duty beside determining the prisoner's guilt. She had openly refused obedience to the Church: if she were innocent of everything else she was irretrievably damned so long as she maintained that attitude; while if she made act of submission any other sins—the clothes, the Voices—could be examined afresh. It might even be that the Church would accept the Voices, for there was nothing in the Law to prevent Joan from hearing the whole heavenly choir under proper safeguards. But until she submitted she was lost, and the first and highest duty the bishop

had to perform so long as she was in his hands was to reclaim her errant soul.

There was that awkward matter of the bargain with Bedford, however. In his eagerness to obtain custody of Joan, Cauchon had accepted her with the understanding that he would return her if his court failed to convict her. Undoubtedly Bedford expected him to burn her, and inwardly he no doubt hoped to do so eventually. But if she submitted and did penance for whatever sins were found upon her, the Church in the very nature of things would undertake to defend her against all other persons whatsoever who sought to harm her. The English would not be very keen to surrender permanently a prisoner who had cost ten thousand pounds and might do untold harm if she ever got free again. So Cauchon had not only to wrestle with the Maid for her soul, but if he gained it, with his secular employers for her body. The Law had brought her to the pass she was in, yet only the Law could save her life.

The Law was nearly spared the necessity. Since her last appearance in court on March 31st, the day before Easter, Joan had been so gravely ill that it was feared she would die. There was no specific malady: it was simply that she was worn out mentally and physically. Despite her brave assurance to her judges that God would send her comfort no matter what they did to her, she was miserably depressed by their refusal of the sacred rites at a season when even the most perfunctory believers are wont to renew their Communion; and she was the most passionate of believers in the least perfunctory of ages. When Cauchon and seven of his colleagues came to administer their first exhortation in her cell on April

18th she was barely able to sit up in bed and answer them.

The bishop explained that they had come "in all charity to comfort her in her illness," and proceeded to do so by pointing out the uncomfortable possibilities in store for her. Her responses on her trial, he pointed out, had been dangerously "diverse and various"; nevertheless the matters put to her, he admitted, had often been very difficult, and she was an ignorant unlettered girl. He was prepared to lend her the services of the doctors present, or any others she might name, to give her daily instruction and lead her back to the way of truth. Otherwise—"if you persist in trusting to your own judgment and inexperience, we shall have to abandon you, so you should consider well the peril you run, which we, with all our strength, all our affection, seek to avert."

Coming from his mouth the words seem sheerest hypocrisy, yet in a strictly professional sense they were absolutely sincere. Personally and politically he would have been quite happy to make the English a present of her life; but his pride as a lawyer and the prestige of the Church of which he was a high officer both commanded that it be done with the most scrupulous observance of the forms.

Joan feebly thanked him and the others for their solicitude and their offer of instruction. She would continue to rely on the counsel God was good enough to send her. All she asked was that she be allowed, if it so happened that she died of her illness, to receive the last sacraments and be buried in holy ground.

The request seemed to indicate a glimmering of grace. They appealed to her in the name of "all the goodness

and piety that seemed to be in her"—a strange admission after all they had said about her. They tried to frighten her with the denial of the Church's privileges so long as she denied obedience to it. She remained unshaken. "If my body dies in prison I hope you will bury it in holy ground; but if not I still trust in God." One wonders how many believers in any age would have trusted in God so intensely as to be comparatively indifferent to the place and manner of their burial. The bishop dangled a "beautiful and notable procession to restore her into a good state," but she waived the offer with the non-committal hope that the Church and all Catholics would pray for her. "I am a good Christian," she affirmed, "truly baptized, and as a good Christian will die, if that be God's will." The visitors gave it up and left, observing, in their leader's words, that "the cunning of the devil prevailed and until now we have had no profit of our efforts."

A fortnight later, on May 2nd, she was hauled, ragged and emaciated, before the two judges and sixty-four "reverend masters," including several notabilities especially invited to hear her publicly exhorted in the great hall of the castle. The preacher was Jean de Chatillon, Archdeacon of Evreux, Professor of Theology and an old school friend of Cauchon's at the University. He lectured her for two hours on what the honest, conscientious and scientific persons present had found reprehensible in her conduct. She would not abate one jot of what she had already said on the trial. For the first time the fearful goal toward which she was moving was specifically alluded to: did she realize, Chatillon asked her pointedly, that in refusing to submit to the One Holy Catholic Church, she was risking punish-

ment by fire? "If I saw the flames before me, I should still answer you the same," she replied. She would soon have the chance to prove it.

They offered to refute her accounts of the sign and the Voices by bringing witnesses from Chinon, the clerks from Poitiers who had examined her, almost anybody she liked of her own party, to Rouen under safe-conduct. She refused. What was the good of it? She knew that there was no more in the famous register at Poitiers about her supernatural revelations than in the record of the trial. All that was in her own head, and there it would for ever remain. As for the sign, let them go to Orleans and try to find the English army that had been there two years ago. She knew also that the clerks and the courtiers of her own side loved her no more than those on the other, since she was simply not the sort that priests or politicians had any use for. For one glorious moment she had imposed her visions on the governors of France, but at the first sign of failure they had washed their hands of her and the visions alike. All the quiet bitterness of her painfully acquired knowledge came out in the words, "I know not what they believe and leave it to their consciences."

She was alone, as utterly alone as a human being could be, cut off from the mother for whom she so often longed and abandoned by the king she had so greatly served. All around were enemies, and the only refuge was in the bosom of the Church which she could only accept by denying God in the form in which He had chosen to reveal Himself to her. The heroine of Orleans herself seems of far smaller stature than the feeble little figure that shambled back to her cell after Chatillon,



the Bishop, the Inquisitor and the sixty-four gowned doctors were through with her, a girl who was very young striving with an institution which was very old, and finding how puny a thing was her inspiration to defend her against its accumulated experience.

For she was beginning to suspect, very dimly as yet, that she could not win, at least on earth, whatever might be the verdict in Heaven. When the "pains of temporal fire" were again mentioned she said, "You will never do what you threaten to me without suffering for it in your own souls and bodies." But that was a far different thing from saying that she would be saved before they could do it. And when Cauchon gave her a final monition to submit, instead of rebuffing him as before, she asked thoughtfully, "How much time will you give me to reflect upon it?" He quickly advised her to decide on the instant, but since she would not she was marched off.

For a week she meditated, and then the bishop thought that it was time to help her to a decision. He had Massieu bring her to the gloomy dungeon in the Great Tower (it is still standing), where he was waiting for her with Chatillon, Loiseleur and a few others. He demanded that she tell the truth about certain things concerning which he suspected that she had lied—all of them, by a coincidence, of some political bearing. Otherwise . . . and he pointed to the rack, where Mauger le Parmentier, an officer of the diocesan court of Rouen and a black-clad companion stood expectantly waiting to begin.

Joan surveyed the instrument and its attendants briefly, then said to Cauchon, "Of course if you are going to tear my limbs apart I'll tell you anything you like;

but when you've finished I shall say that you made me do it by force."

Cauchon and his companions glanced at one another uneasily. Somehow her good sense had led her to hit on the one weakness in the use of torture—a confession made under it was invalid if repudiated within two weeks, and experienced sinners always confessed at the first touch of the rack only to recant later, so that its benefits were confined chiefly to novices and the timorous.

The churchmen quickly discovered that her words were not mere bravado, for she declined to answer their questions exactly as before; so, "seeing how hardened was her soul and fearing that torments would be of little profit to her," they postponed the matter to take further advice. Thirteen assessors were consulted, of whom ten held that the devil had too tight a grip on her soul to release it even under torture, and that it would be inexpedient to mar so perfect a trial with the taint of compulsion, while three took the contrary view, including Master de Courcelles, who sagely suppressed the vote in compiling his edition of the trial.

On Saturday, May 19th, fifty assessors assembled in the vacant archbishop's palace to hear the opinion of the University of Paris and then deliver their own on the prisoner's fate. Cauchon unfolded the bundle of documents that Beaupère, Touraine and Midi had brought back from Paris, remarking before he began to read that it was good to know that at last they would have "the amplest and clearest elucidation of the whole matter, for the completest tranquillity of our consciences and the edification of all concerned."

Never had the University more triumphantly justified

the belief of its children that not even the toughest doubt could survive in the bright rays of its omniscience. The members of the Faculties, it appeared, had not been in the least troubled by their absence from Joan's examination, as had the two conscientious abbots; they were as positive about the facts and her character as if they had made a study of both all their lives. They made no allusion to those hidden facts "which we cannot know," nor once intimated that "God alone, who penetrates all hearts, could decide whether she was in mortal sin." Others might be troubled by these considerations; they knew perfectly well that what was hidden from themselves could be of no possible interest to the Almighty.

The Voices, declared the Faculty of Theology with unanimous voice, were "seductive and pernicious lies proceeding from evil and diabolic spirits, such as Belial, Satan and Behemoth," three demons whose ugly faces were being caught time and again in the pure scientific beams of the Faculty's lantern. Joan's clothes were proof of a dissolute spirit; her making war on the king's enemies proved that she was a traitress, cruel and athirst for human blood; in asserting that God wanted the English and the Burgundians to be beaten she had "transgressed the command to love her neighbour as herself," etc., etc. On each of the twelve articles she was unquestionably guilty several times over. The court had been shown its duty, let them now carry it out. The Faculty of Law responded in similar terms with equal unanimity.

Enclosed with the opinions was a letter to the bishop, which he read with becoming modesty, praising his "celebrated trial" and promising that when he appeared in Heaven the Prince of Pastors would reward him with a

crown of eternal glory for his pastoral zeal in this cause. It must have been gratifying to him after his hard work, as well as the hard words the University had used toward him the previous November. There was also a letter to Henry VI urging him to hurry and polish off the affair—the University seemed to have little doubt that the court would bring in a verdict in accordance with its instructions.

If so, it was perfectly right. When Cauchon put the question of Joan's guilt to the assembled assessors one after another rose, declared, "I adhere to the deliberations of the University," and sat down again. The smooth efficiency of *esprit de corps* had never been seen to better advantage. The canons of Rouen voted with their chapter, and the chapter voted with the Faculty of Theology; the eleven lawyers previously consulted voted in a body to uphold specifically the Faculty of Law. And so it went. The dissonant sounds uttered by the threescore of individual priests, lawyers and doctors in April had become resolved into one swelling sound in May, the echo of Alma Mater's inspired voice. It was now for the two judges to pronounce the prisoner guilty of the charges against her, and Cauchon did so. Again there was an echo—it was merely the Inquisitor agreeing with him.

There remained only to decide on the sentence. Death or perpetual imprisonment? No lesser penalty was even to be considered for one convicted of crimes so grave as hers. The matter was debated; the majority felt that she should be given one more chance to save her life by submitting, since it would be a far greater triumph for the Church—and for the Anglo-Burgundian cause—to win her repentance, with full confession of her sins

and impostures, than to kill her. Cauchon accordingly announced that one more effort would be made to obtain her submission. No one seems to have thought what the English would have to say about it.

On the following Wednesday, May 23rd—the anniversary of her capture—Joan was led into a small room near her cell to hear her final exhortation. The preacher was Pierre Maurice, the most brilliant of the younger canons of Rouen, and amongst the dozen spectators were the Bishops of Théroutanne and Noyon. Maurice read and explained to her the University's opinion at length, then putting the paper aside he spoke to her more gently than anyone had spoken to her for a long time, more wisely than any of his profession, perhaps, had ever spoken to her. "Joan, very dear friend," he called her, and pleaded, "Do not allow yourself to be cut off from Our Lord Jesus Christ, who created you to share in His glory; do not elect the way of eternal damnation with the enemies who seek each day to distract men by taking the figures of angels and saints, saying they are from Heaven. . . . You believed too lightly in your apparitions . . . repel them and acquiesce in the opinions of those who are learned in the Law and the Holy Scriptures. . . ."

It was the Church's case in a nutshell. Then Maurice turned to her side of the matter and illustrated what he meant by two examples that showed a deep insight into her psychology: "Suppose that your king had set you to guard a place, forbidding you to let any stranger enter. Someone comes and says that he has the king's authority, without showing any credential or proof. Well, would you believe and admit him? Just so Our Lord, when He ascended to Heaven, entrusted the govern-

ment of His Church to Saint Peter and his successors, forbidding them in the future to accept anyone who presented himself in His name unless accredited by His words. . . .

"Or suppose that, when you were with your king, some knight or other, born in his domain, rose and said, 'I will not obey the king or submit to his officers,' Would you condemn him? Then what do you, who were received into the Faith of Christ by the sacrament of baptism, who became a daughter of the Church, a bride of Christ, say of yourself for not obeying His officers, the prelates of the Church? . . ."

It was just the sort of appeal to excite her imagination. The analogies were so apt . . . could it be true, she asked herself for the first time, that in accepting the Voices so readily she had really betrayed God's trust, instead of receiving it as she had thought? Had she done in ignorance what she so greatly blamed in Philip the Good and the other rebels to their lawful lord? While she pondered, Maurice went on—and if the man was insincere, then the glow of his words came from a passion greater than himself: "Amend your errors, return to the way of truth, submit yourself to the judgment of the Church . . . if you refuse, know that your soul will be swallowed up in damnation; and I fear the destruction of your body as well. May Jesus Christ preserve you from it." He waited for Joan to answer.

She was moved, shaken, but she was not yet ready to deny the wonderful experience with which she had lived day and night for nearly six years. They painted for her in gruesome detail the building of the fire, the executioner binding her to the stake, the slow torment of her body, but she still shook her head and replied,

"What I said on the trial I will maintain until death."

That was all. Cauchon solemnly declared, "The cause is ended," and that on the morrow sentence would be pronounced and executed. He directed Massieu to take the prisoner back to her cell.

We know nothing at all of what Joan did or thought that night; they left her severely alone except for the company of her gaolers. She said later that her Voices came to her and told her she would abjure on the morrow; one can be sure at least that they were very much on her mind during her long vigil. Her judges had little doubt that she would submit, despite her last words to Maurice; they had had too long experience in the confessional and the court not to be aware of certain earthquakes of the soul.

Never in the history of the world had a girl been through an inquisition like hers or had the massive dogma of the Christian faith exposed so lucidly, so painstakingly, so impressively. She had heard many things that had been strange to her, and it was little wonder if doubt at last touched her. Those doctors who could draw out and dissect her inmost thought . . . they were so sure of themselves . . . might they not, after all, be right and she wrong? The hardest thing in the world for a person broken in body and spirit to cling to is the certainty of his own experience in the face of overwhelming external authority. On the one hand was a horrible death, without the sacraments, without Christian burial; on the other reconciliation with the Church into which she had been baptised, safety, perhaps even peace in the stern nunnery of an ecclesiastical prison . . . all these things she must have turned over

and over in her mind before exhaustion brought her sleep.

Early the next day she was brought to the cemetery of the abbey of Saint Ouen, a small open space with an old stone cross in the centre, a cloister on three sides and the wall of the abbey church on the fourth. A large platform had been erected to hold the dignitaries, headed by Henry Beaufort, Cardinal of England and great-uncle of its king; a smaller one received Joan and William Erard, Canon of Rouen, whom Cauchon had delegated to preach to her before sentence was pronounced, as was the custom with condemned heretics. Nearby stood the scaffold, a high pedestal of plaster on which reposed small branches neatly trimmed and laid crosswise in tiers, with a ladder resting against the high iron stake at the back. Round the limited space stood men-at-arms and a certain number of civilians provided with passes by the English authorities of the city. The comparative lack of formality would seem to indicate that those in the know rather anticipated an anticlimax.

Numbly she listened to Erard discoursing to her on a text from Saint John, "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine,"<sup>1</sup> her eyes straying with irresistible fascination to the executioner and his assistants putting the finishing touches to their pyre. The preacher's voice rolled on, loudly so that everyone should hear the chronicle of her misdeeds, but she stood frozen and unhearing until he attempted to besmirch her cause: "Ha, noble House of France, which was always a defender of the Faith, how you have been deceived! And Charles, who call yourself king, and

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 4.



have attached to yourself an evil woman, a heretic and schismatic; and not only you but all the clergy of your obedience, by whom this woman was examined. . . ."

Into this political diatribe cut the girl's voice, low but clearly audible to everyone: "By my faith, messire, with all due respect, I dare tell you and swear on my life that my king is the most noble Christian in the world and had no share in those things you say of me. If there is any fault in anything I have done, I charge neither him nor anyone else, for it is mine alone." Her lord had forsaken her; she was faithful to him unto death.

Erard directed Massieu to make her keep quiet, and proceeded with his address. When it was concluded he asked whether she would in sign of submission confess all that she was accused of before the assembled multitude. She hesitated, offered at length to refer her acts and words to the Pope. The appeal might have been valid once, but now it was too late: Erard told her sharply that the Pope was too far away and that the Ordinaries were delegated by him as judges, each bishop in his own diocese. Three times he summoned her and then paused. She was silent. From his place on the larger platform Cauchon began to read in a dead hush the sentence of excommunication and death.

He did not finish it. Joan stirred and was seen to make a gesture. The bishop paused, looking at her intently. Then he made a sign to Erard, who produced a paper from his sleeve and began to read it to her: "I, Joan, commonly called the Maid, a miserable sinner. . . ." It was the act of abjuration: the confession of her sins and the humble expression of her desire to be received into penitence.

It was an instant before the spectators took in what was happening, but when they did bedlam broke loose. They had come to see the Maid burn, not repent and get off like any harmless servant wench. "Armagnac traitors," they yelled in fury at the priests and tried to get at them through the line of soldiers. But the line held, and the crowd took out its disappointment by hurling stones at Erard, at Loiseleur, who was assisting in pressing Joan to sign the abjuration, at the bishop himself.

The emotions of the English on the larger platform were as violent as the mob's. An officer of the Cardinal of England's household, a secretary or chaplain, screamed at Cauchon, "You are favouring the Maid," and hurled a string of epithets at him of which traitor was the least.

The bishop, touched in his professional instincts, grew purple with rage. "In such a cause as this I favour no one. It is my office to seek her salvation rather than her death." He flung the paper in his hand to the ground and refused to go on until the man apologized. Even he with all his acumen was not finding it easy to serve two masters.

The Cardinal of England suavely intervened to restore peace. Next to his nephew Bedford he was the most important man in England, and as grieved as anybody that the Maid should let herself be talked out of getting burned. But he was also a Prince of the Church, and appreciated perfectly Cauchon's position. He ordered his subordinate to apologize immediately and thereafter hold his tongue. The bishop recovered his temper and agreed to go on.

Meantime through the din Erard and Loiseleur were explaining the contents of the abjuration to Joan and urging her to sign. She looked from one to the other,

as if scarcely understanding what they were saying to her. They went over the old ground . . . remission . . . sacraments . . . sanctuary in a Church prison under the care of women. "You take a great deal of trouble to convert me," Aimond de Macy heard her say, as if she were trying to puzzle it all out again. In her perplexity she sought the friendly face of Massieu, who merely corroborated the priests, but Erard, already impatient and frightened of the crowd, told him to keep quiet and said peremptorily to Joan, with a meaning nod at the executioners, "Sign now or you will be burned at once."

They put the quill into her inert hand, and with Massieu to guide it she wrote her name and put a cross opposite the signature, saying simply, "I'd rather sign than be burned." As the quill dropped from her hand a strange expression crossed her face, which the onlookers took to be a smile. Perhaps it was an involuntary relaxation after the strain; perhaps it was something else that was far from a smile.

She had acknowledged that the Voices were false, agreed to put off her man's clothes, submit her will entirely and for ever to others . . . at one stroke of the pen she had stripped herself of her own identity almost as if she had never been born.<sup>1</sup> The abjuration was passed up to the bishop, who glanced at it, then drew forth the

<sup>1</sup> The abjuration which was included in the official record of the trial was a document of over five hundred words, in which Joan admitted to the whole fantastic category of deviltry, blasphemy, presumption, etc. All the witnesses—and there were many—agree that what she signed was a folded sheet containing about six lines of writing—"the length of the Lord's Prayer." Undoubtedly the shorter sheet was substituted to make explanation easy at the Cemetery, and it contained the essentials, such as the Voices, the clothes, submission, etc.; but it is also fairly clear that the bishop wanted a more imposing document for publication.

alternative sentence that had been prepared and read it aloud as best he could in the midst of the clamour, . . . "We strike off the chains of excommunication which bind you . . . but that you may truly repent we condemn you to the bread of sorrow and the water of affliction all your days. . . ."

The number of her days was exactly six. The Church broke its promise within ten minutes of making it. "Take her back whence she came," Cauchon directed Massieu when the sentence had been read—back to the horrible cell of the past five months, not to the sanctuary of an ecclesiastical prison with women about her. And by remorseless sequence Joan was driven to breaking her oath of abjuration within forty-eight hours of making it.

For Warwick, commanding in Rouen in Bedford's absence, flatly refused to give her up. He thought that "the king was badly served," and said so bluntly; and his officers declared with equal bluntness that the priests had not earned their pay. Cauchon knew before the ceremony at Saint Ouen that they would not waive their claim on Joan, whatever he had expected earlier, and it was the most abominable duplicity to let Erard make that promise in the Church's name.

That same afternoon Joan put on a long grey robe—her first woman's dress in two and a half years—and had her head shaved so that the new crop of hair should not be contaminated by the old. A little later some of the assessors visited her to make official report of the change and to lecture her on the dangers of backsliding. Both they and she probably anticipated that her life had settled into a groove for many years to come; for she was only nineteen.

## JOAN OF ARC

Next day, Friday the 24th, an English lord (the title was used rather loosely) came in to look at her, knocked her about and tried to rape her—unsuccessfully, by her own account, which is at second hand and not very explicit. On Saturday morning when she woke she asked one of her guards to unlock her irons so that she might get up and wash. The man tore her dress off her and flung on the bed her discarded tunic and hose, which had been kept handy instead of being taken away and burned. She implored the brute to give her back her clothes, but to no avail, and at noon physical necessity drove her to put on the forbidden garments so that she might leave the cell. When she returned the dress had disappeared and she was in a state of relapse.

The rumour came to Cauchon. On Sunday morning he sent Midi, Beaupère and Andre Marguery to look into the matter and report. The castle doors were locked, and while the three were waiting for the keys to be brought a party of English soldiers came into the courtyard, spied them and promptly suggested ducking them in the river. The priests tucked up their gowns and fled, pursued by yells of "False Armagnacs" and other less factional epithets. In their flight they nearly trod on the Inquisitor's scribe, Taquel, who had been sent after them with his quill and parchment.

On Monday the 27th, Joan was examined by a committee of the assessors to determine the reason for her relapse. Her explanations were brief and to the point. She meant to keep the offending clothes, she told them, because they were more suitable for protecting herself against the men amongst whom they had left her. If they would take her to a women's prison, as they had

promised, strike off her irons and let her go to Mass, she would be good, resume her woman's dress and do as the Church said—otherwise, "I had rather do my penance all at once, and die now rather than stay in this cell any longer."

She went further, and retracted her denial of the Voices. One can scarcely wonder. In those terrible forty-eight hours between the abjuration and the relapse, when the Church had left her alone with the most brutal specimens of humanity to be found anywhere, she had turned for comfort again to her Voices, and found it, or as much of it as there was left for her on earth. They had reproached her for forswearing them, but tenderly and with complete understanding of her temptation; and they had again assured her that she need indeed fear nothing, since she was truly sent by God. She knew now that she had misunderstood their promise to deliver her; she was satisfied that she had no other delivery to expect than death.

A court was quickly convened next day, with the same judges, many of the old assessors and some new ones. The proceedings did not take very long. Within a few hours Joan had been pronounced a relapsed heretic and Massieu ordered by Cauchon to produce her at eight o'clock the following morning in the Old Market Place for the execution. One can almost hear the uneasy sigh of the forty theologians as they rose from their chairs. It was undoubtedly a case of relapse, the ultimate offence against the Faith, yet somehow faith seemed to have had little to do with the matter.

Early next morning, Wednesday, May 30th, a large delegation of the judges led by Cauchon in person thronged into the condemned girl's prison. They came on no

errand of mercy, but to insist, in her supreme and their last available hour, with brutal urgency that she reveal the whole secret of her Voices and of the sign. For if she went to her death without that confession it would be a rather watery story they would have to ladle out to the public.

As Cauchon entered, Joan, who was in a state of controlled hysteria, burst out at him, "Bishop, I die because of you!" He tried to remonstrate with her, pointing out that she was dying because she had broken her promise and reverted to her ill-doing, but she retorted fiercely, "If you had kept *your* promise and put me in care of the Church this would not have happened. And so I hold you answerable before God."

A little awkwardly, despite his long experience, he began to question her, for the last time. He reminded her of her boast to escape from prison by the Voices' help and asked her what about it. She acknowledged that she had been deceived, but maintained that she had seen and heard the Voices nevertheless. She described the angels that accompanied them at times, "in great multitude and of tiny dimensions." She admitted that she was the angel who had brought the crown to her king. And on and on, while the crowd outside could be heard calling for the show to begin.

A complete retraction. . . .

Or it would have been if we knew how much of it to believe. Cauchon brought no scribe with him: the questions and answers are not part of the trial, but an appendix made up eight days later from the unattested recollections of those present. Some of the witnesses were uncertain of what they remembered even after so short

a lapse of time; some contradicted themselves violently at the Rehabilitation. And the end of the document is the baldest invention, for it makes Joan "ask pardon of the English and the Burgundians for having killed so many of them and caused them such great damage." It was simply Cauchon's last chance to make the masterpiece of some use to his employers.

Some recantation and submission Joan must have made, however, or she would not have received the sacrament; perhaps the sign sufficed. When finally Cauchon and all the company withdrew, except Martin Ladvenu, the Dominican monk who was to receive her confession, she halted Pierre Maurice, whose exhortation had made so deep an impression on her and asked, "Master Pierre, where shall I be this night?"

"Have you not hope in Our Lord?" returned the young priest. He seemed to remember that whatever cruelty was committed in the name of his Faith, the Faith itself transmuted mortal sin into pardonable human error.

"Yes," she answered slowly, "God willing I shall be with the saints in Paradise." So her retraction was not complete, after all.

Brother Martin confessed her, whereafter Isambard de la Pierre, also of the Order of Dominicans, brought in the Host and the stole for the celebration of the Mass. Torches were lit in the dim cell, "a great multitude" and the two monks chanted litanies and recited the prayer for the dying. Then Massieu led her out to the waiting tumbril, the two priests helped her in and together they set forth on the short ride, accompanied by a hundred and twenty men-at-arms on foot.

The streets were packed as if it were a holiday and the



soldiers had to clear a way for the rumbling cart into the Old Market Place. It was a large irregular square with streets giving into it on several sides. On one side a large stand had been erected for the ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries, while in the centre was a small platform for Joan, facing the west door of a church, and close by another for Nicolas Midi, who was to preach the sermon.

The scaffold was a few paces off at Joan's right. The spectacle was on a larger and more popular, yet more solemn, scale than on the previous Thursday, and eight hundred soldiers were in attendance to prevent disorder.

Joan wore the long grey robe again, and on her head was a paper mitre inscribed, "Heretic, Relapse, Apostate, Idolatress"—a simple slogan for the public, who pretty generally believed that she was being punished for resuming her male apparel and for nothing else. On a placard above the stake was an amplified list of the crimes attaching to the name of "Joan, who calls herself the Maid. . . ."

She stood "very peacefully" while Midi preached to her on the text<sup>1</sup>: "And whether one member suffers, all members suffer with it. . . ." He exhorted her to make her peace with God, for the Church could no longer help her, and then knelt while Cauchon from his place read the terrible formula beginning with, "In the name of God, amen," and ending, "we reject you, we cut you off, we abandon you, praying only that the secular power may moderate its sentence upon you, sparing you death and the mutilation of your members. . . ." An ironical prayer: the Church might not order blood to be shed, but if any secular power had ever refused to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians xii. 26.

carry out sentence of death, the Church would have retorted with instant excommunication upon those whose duty it was to do so.

Joan knelt in the company of the two monks, praying and weeping with them at the same time, and from all over the square came sobs, even of the priests who had brought her where she was. Some of the English soldiers, however, less affected by the scene than by the hour, which was getting on for noon, growled, "Well, priests, are you going to make us dine here?" But one of them, like a great prototype, heard her ask for a cross and made one for her out of two bits of wood. She kissed it and put it in her bosom "between gown and flesh."

The crowd's nerves began to give way; above the low monotone of prayers and sobs rose shrieks as men and women flung themselves on the ground in fits of hysterical raving. Cauchon and the Bailiff of Rouen (the civil officer representing the secular arm) exchanged glances. No words passed, but at a signal the executioner, Geoffrey Therage, sent his two assistants across the short intervening space to the platform where Joan was kneeling. They seized her, hurried her to the scaffold and up the ladder. A chain was passed round her waist, binding her to the stake, and an instant later the first wisp of smoke drifted upward through the pile of dry twigs. So expeditiously was it all accomplished, in order to cut short the disturbing symptoms amongst the onlookers, that the lay sentence was neglected—a breach of decorum long remembered by the clerics with grief and scandal that the victim should have gone direct to her death on the Church's sole judgment.

Joan, seemingly in a daze, murmured, "Rouen, Rouen, are you indeed to be my home?" as if only then did

hope at last abandon her of hearing the clatter of French hooves and seeing the white standard with the golden lilies approaching on an errand of rescue. She shut her eyes a moment as the first heat scorched her, then opened them and called to Brother Martin to hold aloft the bright cross borrowed from the altar of the church over the way. With her gaze fixed upon it she prayed in little gasps until the flames, mercifully fed by oil, closed round her in a roar and the smoke concealed her from view. A great wail of "Jesus" rang across the market place, followed by utter—and final—silence.

The scene that followed was apocalyptic. A man screamed that he had seen her soul rise from the fire in the form of a white dove and fly away "on the side of France." Others shouted that the heavens had opened to receive her bodily. At a command from the bailiff the executioner parted the flames to display the corpse still there, charred and limp at the foot of the stake, then swept the twigs together so that they might finish their work. It was all to no purpose. The revulsion had already begun. A secretary to the king of England exclaimed loudly, "We are lost, we have burned a saint," and one of the priests who had voted for her death groaned, "I would that my soul were where hers will be to-night." A final verdict of state and Church had been unwittingly pronounced by two of their minor representatives ere the Maid was five minutes dead.

Before the ashes had quite cooled they were swiftly collected and scattered into the Seine, lest the people should wait to gather and preserve them as relics. A vain precaution, in more senses than one. The intangible relics of her being were already immortal in the memory of a people, while in the course of time the veneration

## THE END

of her physical relics (such as they are) would be made lawful and virtuous by the same institution which had just destroyed her body . . . when, on April 18th, 1909, before a vast concourse, including sixty French bishops, assembled in the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, she would be proclaimed by Apostolic Brief "the victim of expiation for the ransom of France" and a saint of "the Catholic Church, of which she was always a submissive child. . . ."

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